



COA's Homemaker Program

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LAKE COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

BRIDGE

Lake County's premier news source for healthy aging and contemporary living since 1972

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**SAVE
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Fifty, Sixty... or Seventy?

The ever-changing definition of "senior"

When I was 23 years old, I worked at a newspaper that published a monthly section called the "50+ Page." At the time, it seemed perfectly reasonable. After all, 50 was clearly the beginning of "senior" territory... right?

Now, nearly four decades later, that memory makes me laugh a little. Fifty doesn't seem ancient at all anymore.

The truth is, there's no single moment when someone officially becomes a "senior." Depending on where you look, the starting line moves around quite a bit.

Take membership cards, for example. The well-known organization AARP begins offering membership at age 50. In Ohio, residents can apply for a Golden Buckeye Card at age 60, offering discounts at thousands of businesses across the state.

Many senior centers also welcome members beginning at age 60, although a few open their doors at 55. And the Social Security Administration currently lists 67 as the full retirement age for most Americans.

So which one is it? Are you a senior at 50? At 55? At 60? Or not until your late 60s?

Sometimes the label shows up in unexpected ways. I remember the last time I played golf at age 53. When I went to pay, the person behind the counter automatically gave me the senior discount. I didn't mind saving a few dollars, but it was the first time anyone had assumed I was older than I actually was. It made me wonder—had my percentage of gray hair crossed some invisible line that suddenly made me look older? Or did the per-



son behind the counter just need better glasses?

Of course, the real question might be this: does turning one of those milestone birthdays suddenly change who you are? Does the clock strike midnight on your 60th birthday and someone deliver a rocking chair to your porch?

Of course not.

See SENIOR on page 3

Bridge mailing to be discontinued

For over 50 years, Bridge has served as an important source of information for older adults throughout Lake County. Published quarterly by the Lake County Council on Aging, the newspaper has provided updates on services, programs, health information, community events, and resources available to residents age 60 and older. The publication has been mailed to over 50,000 senior households throughout the county since 2020.

After this issue, the quarterly printed mailing of Bridge will be discontinued. This decision was made after careful

evaluation of rising printing and postage costs, changing communication habits, and the need to prioritize funding for direct services that support older adults in Lake County.

Why the change?

In recent years, the cost of producing and mailing large-scale publications has increased significantly. As a nonprofit organization committed to serving the needs of the county's growing senior population, the Council on Aging must continually review how resources are allocated.

By eliminating the mailing of Bridge, funds can be redirected toward programs and services that directly assist older adults—such as home-delivered meals, social work services, caregiver support, and other programs designed to help seniors remain independent in their homes.

Continuing to share information

Although Bridge will no longer be distributed county wide, information previously included in it will continue to be available in several ways:

See BRIDGE on page 3



Hot Days Ahead

Is Your Air Conditioner Ready?

GET AN A/C TUNE-UP NOW AND STAY COOL ALL SPRING & SUMMER
And save big on other services!

Tune-Up Special

\$69.95

AC, mini-split or heat pump

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\$25 off

Not valid with any other offers. Coupon good through 6/30/26.

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\$150 off **\$300 off**

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Not valid with any other offers. Coupon good through 6/30/26.



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March for Meals 2026 brings hope to seniors

Hundreds of Lake County residents gathered at the Great Lakes Mall to take part in the 2026 "March for Meals" event hosted by the Council on Aging. This marked the agency's 19th edition celebrating the national recognition event.

March for Meals is the nonprofit organization's annual fundraising campaign highlighting food insecurity among seniors and the dedicated volunteers who deliver meals across Lake County. For many isolated seniors, these deliveries are more than a meal—they are a vital daily check-in that offers connection, reassurance, and care.

The program provides nutritious quality food, a daily wellness check and positive interactions with our dedicated meal delivery volunteers. These generous individuals take great pride in the services they provide each day delivering a hot

nutritious meal and providing a safety well check to Lake County seniors all year long.

Over 45 businesses sponsored the event with the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging as title sponsor. Dozens of other businesses and individuals participated as in-kind sponsors, donating food, raffle baskets and giveaways! At the main stage, DJ Jesse Webb provided musical entertainment and assisted with drawing winning tickets for over 20 incredible raffle baskets. This year's participants received a commemorative t-shirt, enjoyed food, and giveaways.

The Council on Aging would like to thank all of those who participated, and of course the volunteers who helped make the event so successful, including many staff members.

Sharing love with seniors and their pets

On Valentine's Day, the Lake County Council on Aging shared *Letters of Love* with nearly 900 seniors in the Meals on Wheels and Lunch Place programs. This annual tradition features handcrafted Valentine's cards created by Council volunteers, bringing a special touch of connection to seniors.

This year, the wishes reached 65 seniors in the Meow or Woof Pets Meals on Wheels program, along with their 75 cats, 47 dogs, 3 birds, and 2 rabbits. In partnership with the Lake Humane Society's Auggie's Pantry, the Pet Meals on Wheels program provides supplemental food for the pets of seniors who cannot visit the pantry in person. Ensuring pets have enough food allows seniors to maintain their own nutrition without sharing their Meals on Wheels meals.

Love took a four-legged form for this year's Pet MOW Valentine's event. Students at South Elementary in Madison conducted a successful campaign to raise funds for the

Pet Meals on Wheels program. The fifth and sixth grade student council along with library aide Erin Cicero, presented community and volunteer engagement specialist Denise Powell with treats and toys for every pet and a check for \$250 for the Pet Meals on Wheels program. The treats and toys along with the monthly supplemental food packed by the volunteers at Lake Humane Society delighted seniors and their pets. We are grateful for the support from the students at South Elementary in Madison.

The Pet MOW program encourages ongoing ways to share love beyond Valentine's Day. Individuals and groups can host a do-it-yourself pet food drive, make financial donations for veterinary or grooming care, or volunteer with Meals on Wheels or Pet MOW to make a lasting difference in the lives of seniors and their pets.

For more information, email LLlewellyn@lcco.org or call (440) 205-8111 ext. 241.

Seniors from page 1

In fact, today's seniors are living more active lives than ever before. Many people continue working, volunteering, traveling, and staying physically active well into their 70s and 80s.

A perfect example comes from my own family. My mother-in-law traveled to Italy at age 80. She navigated airports, explored historic cities, and enjoyed the adventure just like any other traveler. Age didn't slow her down—it simply meant she had more life experience to bring along for the trip.

Stories like that are becoming more common every year.

Medical advances, better nutrition, and healthier lifestyles mean many older adults remain energetic and engaged far longer than previous generations. Walking groups, pickleball courts, volunteer organizations, travel clubs, and lifelong learning programs are full of adults who have technically crossed into "senior" territory—but certainly don't feel old.

At the same time, programs designed for the aging population still play an important and valuable role.

Organizations like the Lake County Council on Aging offer services to residents age 60 and older, providing resources that help people remain independent and comfortable in their homes. Senior centers offer social activities, educational programs, and opportunities to connect with others in the community.

For some, those programs become an important part of daily life. For others, they're simply another option to explore when the time feels right.

Maybe that's the key point: becoming a "senior" isn't really about a specific birthday.

It's about entering a stage of life where experience, perspective, and freedom often take center stage.

For some people, that might begin at 60. For others, it might not feel real until retirement finally arrives. And some may happily accept the senior discount while insisting they're still young at heart.

Either way, the definition keeps evolving.

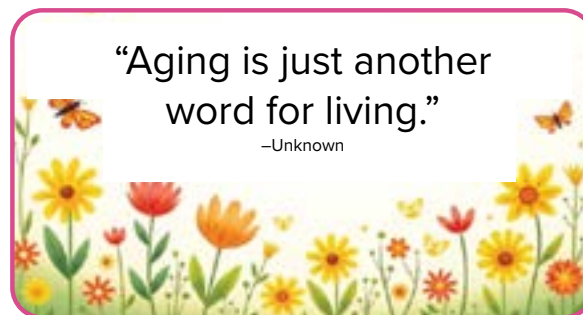
What hasn't changed is the idea that later years can be filled with activity, purpose, and enjoyment. Whether that means traveling the world, volunteering in the community, spending more time with family, or simply enjoying a slower pace of life, there are countless ways to make the most of the years ahead.

So while programs and organizations may draw lines at different ages, the truth is that becoming a "senior" isn't really about a number.

Maybe the real answer is simpler than all the definitions and eligibility requirements.

You're not really a senior until you decide you are—and most people aren't in any hurry to make that decision.

~By Dan Miller



Bridge from page 1

- Email newsletters and digital updates for subscribers
- Printed copies of the newsletter available at senior centers and community locations such as libraries throughout Lake County
- Information shared through community presentations, outreach events, and social media

These options will allow the Council on Aging to continue providing timely information while reaching seniors and caregivers through multiple channels.

Commitment to Lake County seniors

The mission of the Lake County Council on Aging remains un-

changed: to connect older adults and their support systems with services and opportunities that enhance independence and quality of life.

While the format of communication may evolve, the agency remains dedicated to ensuring that seniors, families, and caregivers continue to receive the information and support they need.

Residents who would like to sign up for the newsletter, can do so from the link on the home page of our website at lcco.org or scan the QR code.

For anyone needing assistance signing up, please contact the Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111 ext. 223 for help.



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Mission Statement

The Lake County Council on Aging provides aging adults and their support system with services and opportunities that enable them to achieve an optimal, self-defined quality of life.

The Council on Aging maintains a policy of equal opportunity in matters of program, contracting or employment regardless of national origin, sex, race, handicap, politics, religion, color or age.

Lake County Council on Aging

8520 East Avenue, Mentor, Ohio 44060

(440) 205-8111

Open Monday through Friday 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

www.lcco.org

SCAM ALERT

Catheter Kit Charges

Scammers are stealing Medicare numbers to submit catheter claims for people who don't use them!



Closely review your statements for this type of activity. Common charges include:

- Intermittent urinary catheter
- Coude tip urinary catheter
- Tube to drain bladder

Has this happened to you?
Call the **Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol**. We can help check your account for suspected fraud and then help get it resolved.

800-293-4767

www.proseniors.org/ohio-smp



Supported by a \$949,633 award with 100% funding from ACL/HHS.

MONEY MATTERS

Tax season scams: what to watch for

By Paul Pahoresky, Board Vice President, Lake County Council on Aging

Every year when tax season arrives, so do the scammers. They know people are stressed, busy, and worried about getting their returns right, and they take full advantage of that. What makes these scams so effective is how believable they can sound in the moment. A phone call claiming to be from the IRS, a text message warning of “legal action,” or an email demanding immediate payment can shake even the calmest person. Understanding how these scams work—and what the IRS will never do—can go a long way toward protecting yourself and those around you.

Most of these scams rely on pressure, fear, and urgency. The goal is to make you react before you have time to think. Many calls follow a predictable pattern. The caller claims there is a problem with your taxes—perhaps unpaid taxes, an error in a return, or even an investigation. They then threaten arrest, wage garnishment, legal action, or license suspension. The next step is a demand for immediate payment, often through wire transfers, gift cards, or by asking for banking information. Frequently, the caller will try to keep you on the phone so you do not have time to verify whether the call is legitimate.

These tactics work because they target emotions rather than logic. Even people who know better can be caught off guard when someone sounds authoritative and urgent. I personally receive automated robo-calls several times a week from a group calling itself “The Tax Reso-



lution Unit,” claiming they can help with my tax problem. I know it is a scam, but the calls keep coming.

One of the best protections you have is understanding how the IRS actually communicates. The IRS does not call out of the blue demanding immediate payment. They do not threaten arrest over the phone, and they do not request payment through gift cards, Venmo, Zelle, PayPal, or wire transfers. They also do not send texts or emails asking you to verify personal information. In most cases, the IRS communicates by mail first, and the tone is formal—not aggressive or threatening.

If you receive one of these calls, the best thing to do is pause before reacting. Scammers want you to panic. My personal approach is simple: I hang up. It may feel rude, but protecting yourself is more important. Never share personal information such as your Social Security number or banking details with an unknown caller.

Tax scams are not going away, but awareness is one of the strongest defenses we have. Staying calm, staying skeptical, and verifying information directly with the IRS can help turn tax season from a moment of vulnerability into one of confidence.



The Lake County Council on Aging provides many essential services, including delivering nutritious meals to the county's most vulnerable seniors. Donations will help us replenish food supplies, subsidize personnel, and enable tech-based efforts to check in on isolated elderly recipients.

Please consider a tax-deductible donation by visiting our website at www.lcco.org. Thank you!

A tidy home and a happy life with the Homemaker Program

By Patricia Wem, Homemaker Program Manager, Lake County Council on Aging

Want less cleaning and more living? Let our professional, caring homemakers handle the chores while you enjoy your day.

The Lake County Council on Aging Homemaker Program provides light housekeeping services twice a month to help seniors maintain safe, comfortable homes.

So, what is considered light housekeeping? While the program does not include deep cleaning projects such as carpet cleaning or window washing, it does cover essential household tasks, including:

- Dusting (living room and primary bedroom)
- Vacuuming (living room and primary bedroom)
- Sweeping and mopping (kitchen and bathroom floors)
- Cleaning and sanitizing kitchen counters, appliances, and cabinets
- Freshening the primary bathroom (countertop, sink, toilet, shower/tub)

Why is housekeeping important for seniors? As we age, routine household tasks can become more difficult. Arthritis, mobility or balance is-



issues, vision changes, weakness, and other health concerns can make even simple chores physically demanding—and sometimes unsafe.

The Homemaker Program helps reduce the risk of falls or injuries while ensuring that seniors can continue living independently in their

own homes. Families also gain peace of mind knowing their loved one's home is being maintained regularly.

Benefits of light housekeeping include:

Less physical strain – Cleaning requires energy and strength. Having assistance helps conserve both.

Injury prevention – Removing the need to bend, lift, or climb reduces the risk of accidents.

Comfort and well-being – A tidy home creates a sense of calm and order.

A healthier living space – Regular cleaning helps limit dust, allergens, and germs.

Support for independence – Most importantly, these services allow seniors to age in place safely and comfortably in familiar surroundings.

A clean, well-maintained home provides more than appearance it offers security, dignity, and peace of mind.

For more information about the Council on Aging Homemaker Program, please call (440) 205-8111. Staff members are happy to answer questions and discuss available services.



Lake County, Ohio

Do you need help with:

- Security Deposit/1st Month's rent
- Subsidy
- Moving Assistance

SCAN ME



STAR PROGRAM

SECOND TUESDAY
OF THE MONTH
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Need help with rent? Fair Housing Resource Center can provide assistance for individuals with Security Deposit/1st month's rent, temporary subsidy, or moving assistance.

How to Apply

FHRC hosts an Intake day on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Intake day is 1 day each month when FHRC accepts applications for our STAR Program.

INTAKE DAY DETAILS

When: April 14, May 12, June 9
Time: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Where: Fair Housing Resource Center
1100 Mentor Avenue,
Painesville, Oh 44077

How to Apply?

1. Contact our office for an application before intake day.
2. Complete the application and gather the supporting documents.
3. Arrive to our office during Intake day hours with the application and supporting documents.
4. You will meet with an FHRC staff member who will review your application and documents to make sure a complete application is submitted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



440-392-0147

www.fhrc.org



1100 Mentor Avenue, Painesville

Joe Tomsick concludes 14-year tenure at Council on Aging

Former CEO begins a new professional chapter after leading a period of growth and modernization

After 14 years of leadership, Joe Tomsick has stepped down as Chief Executive Officer of the Lake County Council on Aging (COA), concluding the longest CEO tenure in the organization's history. As he begins a new professional chapter, he leaves behind an agency that is stronger, more innovative, and deeply connected to the needs of Lake County's older adults.

Since taking the helm in 2012, Tomsick guided the Council on Aging through a period of steady growth and modernization. Programs and services expanded, facilities were improved, and a skilled, compassionate team was built with a clear focus: enhancing quality of life for seniors across the county.

"Joe brought vision, energy, and heart to this organization from day one," said Cameron Zwagerman, Tomsick's first board president. "His leadership positioned the

Council on Aging for long-term success in serving seniors."

Among his most notable accomplishments was securing more than \$1.1 million in grant funding from regional and national foundations. Those resources supported initiatives that help older adults age safely in place, addressing housing stability, food insecurity, emergency needs, and even pet care assistance — a service often overlooked but deeply meaningful to many seniors.

Tomsick also oversaw significant facility and infrastructure improvements. Renovations to nutrition sites, technology upgrades, new kitchen equipment, and security enhancements strengthened the agency's ability to serve the community efficiently. A comprehensive 2021 renovation of the East Avenue office created a more welcoming and functional space for staff, volunteers, and visitors alike.

He demonstrated adaptability in program development as well. Through strategic partnerships and ARPA funding, the agency relocated the Mentor Nutrition Site, secured emergency kitchen space to protect meal services, and expanded collaborative efforts aimed at improving senior health outcomes. Working alongside community partners, Tomsick helped pilot programs focused on reducing hospital readmissions and advancing comprehensive geriatric care.

Beyond operations, he was a visible and consistent advocate for older adults. In 2012, he established the Ruth Densmore Senior Advocate Award to honor individuals and organizations supporting seniors in Lake County. He launched the "Aging in Lake County" forums for elected officials and, beginning in 2013, hosted the weekly WINT Radio program Our Aging World, helping elevate issues affecting older residents.

Strategic planning remained central to his leadership. The agency's "Vision 2020" plan emphasized direct senior impact, collaboration, and responsiveness to changing demographics. In recent years, that vision translated into expanded outreach services and modernized case management and volunteer systems.

His leadership proved especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council on Aging rapidly adapted services to meet



increasing needs, helping ensure seniors remained supported during an uncertain time. Expanded communication efforts also brought information and resources directly to tens of thousands of senior households across the county.

Throughout his tenure, Tomsick prioritized staff development and a strong organizational culture, fostering an environment where employees could grow professionally while remaining focused on serving older adults with dignity and respect.

Reflecting on his time at COA, Tomsick expressed pride in the agency's progress and gratitude for the staff, board members, and community partners who supported its mission.

As the Council on Aging looks ahead, it does so on a strong foundation built during a transformative era of leadership—one defined by growth, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to Lake County's seniors.



SENIORS ON THE GO

FREE TRANSPORTATION NOW OFFERED ON LAKETRAN LOCAL ROUTES 1-9

Laketransit and the Lake County Board of Commissioners provide Lake County senior citizens, 60 years and older, free transportation on Laketransit's Local Routes 1-9.

Complete a Laketransit Reduced Fare Application and verify age to qualify for Seniors on the Go.

Call 440-350-1000 or scan code:



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Email: sammet62@gmail.com**

By Denise Powell, Volunteer & Community Engagement Specialist, Lake County Council on Aging

The importance of volunteering

Volunteering is the backbone of a caring community. By dedicating even a small portion of your time to support a senior or homebound individual, you help them maintain independence while aging in place. This engagement addresses daily needs and contributes to sustainable solutions that uplift entire communities.

Volunteering is more than helping others—it enriches the volunteer and strengthens the community. Serving at-risk populations offers a unique perspective on the challenges others face, fostering empathy and self-awareness. It also positively impacts mental health: studies show volunteering can reduce stress, combat depression, and increase happiness. The sense of accomplishment gained from giving time and effort contributes significantly to psychological well-being.

Beyond personal growth, volunteering builds social connections. It unites

people from diverse backgrounds in a common goal, often leading to lasting friendships and a strong sense of belonging. These relationships reinforce community cohesion and create a network of support for those in need.

Engaging in volunteer work provides a meaningful sense of purpose. Knowing your efforts directly improve the lives of seniors and homebound neighbors instills a fulfillment that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Through volunteering, individuals strengthen the social fabric, enhance their own well-being, and ensure that vulnerable community members receive the care and support they deserve. Every act of service—big or small—has a ripple effect, fostering a more compassionate and connected community.

For more information about volunteering with the Lake County Council on Aging, call Denise Powell at (440) 205-8111.

Shout out to creative doers...

Thank you to our amazing artistically gifted volunteers for your time, creativity, and care in making cozy blankets, fabric tote bags, handmade greeting cards and embellished lunch bags for our nearly 800 Meals on Wheels recipients.

Your generosity, talent, and handmade creations truly make a joyous impact on a recipient. From individual contributors to local school students, scout troops, the Sew4Service Euclid Chapter group, and Progressive Insurance employees. Our delivery volunteers and congregate meal site staffers have been privy to some of the most genuine smiles of appreciation when presenting the gifts.

And this is not a one and done occurrence. These creators are busy all year long tailoring their gifts for holidays, seasons and personal celebratory events. Combined, their hours total thousands yearly. If you have a creative niche that you would like to share, please contact the volunteer and community engagement specialist at (440) 205-8111 or email dpowell@lcoa.org.



Try something new at Lake Metroparks this spring and summer!

Today's seniors are using free time for a variety of lively leisure activities like hiking, biking and kayaking!



Lake Metroparks has more than 60 miles of trails to hike, several different parks along rivers and tributaries, eight ponds to fish, six lakefront parks to explore and summer kayak and stand-up paddleboard rentals at the beach at Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park.

To experience the many adventures that can be had right here in Lake County, visit lakemetroparks.com or call 440-358-7275 to set up your next adventure.



Spring art show on display through May 10 9 am to 5 pm daily at Penitentiary Glen Nature Center in Kirtland

The state of Ohio is home to 88 counties brimming with quaint towns, bustling cities, museums, theme parks, historical sites, sports venues, parks—including a National Park—vineyards Lake Erie, and so much more!

Let members of the Western Reserve Photographic Society take you on a magical photographic adventure to discover what our great state has to offer.

LAKEMETROPARKS.COM

By Linda Llewellyn, Director of Community Services, Lake County Council on Aging

Ten healthy eating tips

Recognizing the significant role that nutrition plays in good health, the Lake County Council on Aging offers two different services for Lake County residents aged 60 and over. Everyone is familiar with Meals on Wheels, right? This program is designed to provide hot meals five days each week to home-bound seniors.

But did you know there are also dine-in options throughout Lake County where a nutritious meal may be enjoyed with the company of others in your neighborhood?

The Council on Aging operates five meal sites throughout the county that serve hot lunches five days per week, Monday through Friday, providing 1/3 of the daily-required recommendations of USDA. There is no charge, although a suggested voluntary donation of \$1.50 is accepted. A reservation in advance of

the meal is required.

Making healthy food choices is important at any age. Food provides important nutrients you need to maintain good health. Eating at a Council on Aging nutrition site takes the guesswork out of meal planning.

The National Institute on Aging and the United States Department of Agriculture offer 10 suggestions to guide seniors toward good nutrition. How many are YOU following?

1. Drink plenty of liquids

With age, you may lose some of your sense of thirst. Don't wait to have a drink until you are thirsty. It is important to drink water often. Low-fat or fat-free milk or 100% juice also helps you stay hydrated. Limit beverages that have lots of added sugars or salt.

2. Make eating a social event

Meals are more enjoyable when you eat with others. Invite a friend to join you a few times each week or meet at one of the Lake County Council on Aging nutrition sites. Each site offers weekday lunches for a \$1.50 suggested donation. Meals are reserved in advance, so please call for more information.

3. Plan healthy meals

Find trusted nutrition information from ChooseMyPlate.gov and the National Institute on Aging. Get advice on what to eat, how much to eat, and which foods to choose, all based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Find sensible, flexible ways to choose and prepare tasty meals so you can eat foods you need.

4. Know how much to eat

Learn to recognize how much to eat so you can control portion size. In today's culture, portion sizes have gotten out of hand. MyPlate's Super Tracker shows amounts of food you need. When eating out, ask for a takeout container. One restaurant dish might be enough for two meals or more.

5. Vary your vegetables

Include a variety of different colored vegetables to brighten your plate. This variety of vegetables is not only visually pleasing but also offers diversity in vitamins. Most vegetables are a low-calorie source of nutrients and a good source of fiber.

6. Eat for your teeth and gums

Many people find that their teeth and gums change as they age. People with dental problems sometimes find it hard to chew fruits, vegetables, or meats. Don't miss needed nutrients! Eating softer foods can help. Try cooked or canned foods like unsweetened fruit, low-sodium soups, or canned tuna.

7. Use herbs and spices

Foods may seem to lose their flavor as you age. If favorite dishes taste different, it may not be the cook! Maybe your sense of smell, sense of taste, or both have changed. Medicines may also change how foods taste. Add flavor to your meals with herbs and spices. Stay away from the saltshaker.

8. Keep food safe

Don't take a chance with your health. A food-related illness can be life threatening for an older person. Throw out food that might not be safe because it is old or may not have been kept at the proper temperature. Keep cold food cold, and hot food hot. Other foods can be harmful to you when they are raw or under cooked, such as eggs, sprouts, fish, shellfish, meat, or poultry.

9. Read the Nutrition Facts label

Make the right choices when buying food. Pay attention to important nutrients to know as well as calories, fats, sodium, and the rest of the Nutrition Facts label. Ask your doctor if there are ingredients and nutrients you might need to limit or to increase.

10. Ask your doctor about vitamins or supplements

Food is the best way to get nutrients you need. Should you take vitamins? Ask your doctor. Some can interfere with your medicines or affect your medical conditions.

For more information about Meals on Wheels or the Lunch Place, call Lake County Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111 or visit www.lcco.org.

For more nutritional information go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov and www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics/nutrition.



PLATINUM
REAL ESTATE

The Thorne Team

Alan Thorne
440-796-0438

David Thorne
440-339-6040

- Senior real estate specialists
- Free in-person consultation
- Volunteers with the Lake County Council on Aging
- Volunteers for Meals on Wheels



Ask about our special closing incentive!
Mention "Meals on Wheels" during the consultation



The remodeling partner you need as you age in place in your home

BOOK A
FREE
CONSULTATION
WITH JACK



Design, Build & Remodel Services

- Jack Dever, owner of Dever Design & Build, will oversee every detail of your project personally. No handing you off to someone else who has no idea of what you want or an understanding of the project.
- Your project will be professionally designed and built to the specifications needed to transform your home into a place where you can live the rest of your life. A home that is simply beautiful, as seen in the fine details of the craftsmanship put forth by northeast Ohio's best artisans — something that you will be proud to showcase to all of your family and friends for years to come.
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Testimonial

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Jack Dever

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Enjoy good food with friends at Lake County Council on Aging meal sites



If you are age 60 or older and are looking for companionship and healthy, nutritious food, then schedule time to eat a meal with a friend or come and make new friends at your local Lunch Place.

The Lunch Place serves hot lunches five days per week, Monday through Friday, providing 1/3 of the daily-required recommendations of USDA. There is no charge, although a suggested voluntary donation of \$1.50 is accepted. A reservation in advance of the meal is required.

More information about the Lunch Place can be obtained by calling the numbers listed.

The Lunch Place at Madison

Lunch starts: noon
Madison Senior Center
2938 Hubbard Road
Phone: (440) 428-7002

The Lunch Place at Wickliffe

Lunch starts: 11:30 am
Wickliffe Senior Center
900 Worden Road
Phone: (440) 373-5017

The Lunch Place at Painesville

Lunch starts: 11:30 am
Extended Housing Building
270 East Main St. – Lower Level
Phone: (440) 354-6700

The Lunch Place at Willowick

Lunch starts: 11:30 am
Willowick Senior Center
321 East 314th Street
Phone: (440) 946-8822

Join seniors who know where to have the best lunch!

By Linda Llewellyn, Director of Community Services, Council on Aging

Looking for a welcoming place to enjoy a nutritious meal and good company? The Lake County Council on Aging's Lunch Place offers seniors just that—delicious meals, friendly faces, and an affordable suggested donation of \$1.50.

With four Lunch Place locations throughout Lake County, seniors gather for a hot, balanced lunch while reconnecting with friends or meeting new ones. When asked about their experience, many simply say they “love it.”

“I’m lucky to have found a lunch program with a beautiful lunchroom, great meals and a wonderful staff—and the price is very affordable,” shared one senior. Another recently wrote on a satisfaction survey, “I wish there was a ‘VERY’ satisfied option. Great place, and I plan to come more often in 2026.”

Each meal is thoughtfully planned by a registered dietitian to provide one-third of daily nutritional needs while keeping calories, fat, and sodium in check. Every hot lunch includes a protein entrée, starch, vegetable, fruit, bread, and milk—a complete meal that is both healthy and satisfying.

Beyond the food, many seniors say the social connection is what keeps them coming back. “I completely enjoy the conversation and the staff interaction,” one diner



shared. The Lunch Place offers more than a meal — it provides a sense of community.

Getting started is simple. You may attend once a month, twice a week, or as often as you like. Reservations are required and must be made by Tuesday of the week prior to the days you plan to attend. You may also reserve for an entire month at once.

First-time guests complete a brief, confidential registration form that includes basic contact information and a short ten-question nutrition risk assessment. Forms and monthly menus are available at www.lcco.org/menu.

Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. at most locations, with Madison serving at noon.

If you’re ready to enjoy good food and great company, call your nearest Lunch Place to make a reservation. We look forward to welcoming you—and chances are, you’ll be saying “Love it!” too.

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COMMUNITY SERVICES

By **Tim Rieder**, Social Work Manager, Lake County Council on Aging

Stress response for seniors

It's important to recognize life's stressors and develop healthy ways to cope in order to maintain overall well-being. Stress can take many forms. It may be personal, such as the loss of a loved one or a new medical diagnosis. It can stem from traumatic events, like severe weather impacting a home, or from financial pressures such as rising rent or utility costs. Any of these challenges can disrupt daily life and leave a person feeling vulnerable or isolated. However, how someone responds to stress can have a powerful—and often positive—impact on their well-being. For seniors, these challenges can be especially difficult. Maintaining strong social connections with family and friends provides an important outlet to talk through concerns and feel supported. Simply knowing someone is there can ease stress and bring comfort during difficult times.

Community involvement also plays a key role. Local senior centers and groups offer opportunities to build friendships, stay engaged, and find a sense of belonging. Self-care activities—such as light exercise, listening to music, or spending time outdoors—can help reduce stress and improve mood. Attending spiritual services, whether in person or online, may also provide strength and resilience.

Professional support is another

valuable option. Seeking counseling for mental health concerns can help individuals navigate overwhelming situations. Staying on top of routine medical care is equally important, as regular checkups can help prevent or manage health issues before they become more serious sources of stress.

The Lake County Council on Aging offers services designed to support seniors facing these challenges. For example, a senior concerned about meal preparation or food costs can connect with an Information and Assistance Specialist, who can provide guidance on local food resources, including food pantries, as well as programs like Lunch Place and Home Delivered Meals.

In addition, licensed social workers conduct in-home assessments to better understand a senior's needs and connect them with appropriate services. They can also provide referrals to other community resources that may help address specific concerns or stressful situations.

Developing healthy routines, staying connected, and asking for help when needed can make a meaningful difference. While stress is a natural part of life, having the right support and tools in place can help seniors navigate challenges with greater confidence and peace of mind.



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 Madeline K. Bartsche
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 Leslie E. Wargo (of counsel)

* Certified Elder Law Attorney by the National Elder Law Foundation

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AMANDA'S
FAMILY HEARING

By Jackie Oliverio, Manager, Aging and Disability Resource Center, Lake County Council on Aging

“Welcome to Medicare” presentations

Learn about plan options, enrollment, costs and more!

Join the Lake County Council on Aging’s benefits specialist for one of our Welcome to Medicare presentations! These presentations will provide you with an unbiased look at the complex and often confusing world of Medicare. Whether you are new to Medicare or have been on it for a while, these presentations are beneficial for everyone, as there is always something new to learn. Our benefits specialist, Kellie, will help you understand the different plan options, enrollment windows, anticipated costs, and how to avoid costly penalties.

Presentations are FREE and open to the public, but registration is required. Please contact the respective site below to register.

Unable to attend a presentation, but want to learn more? Our benefits specialist (OSHIIP certified) is available to schedule one-on-one appointments. During an appointment, you may also be screened for Extra Help and Medicare Savings Programs, as well as other state and federally-funded benefits such as Medicaid or SNAP. To learn more or schedule an appointment, please call (440) 205-8111.

Welcome to Medicare Presentations

Wednesday, April 15 • noon | Perry Senior Center | (440) 259-3772
Thursday, April 30 • 1 p.m. | Madison Senior Center | (440) 428-6664
Friday, May 8 • 10 a.m. | Morley Public Library | (440) 352-3383
Tuesday, May 12 • 10 a.m. | Mentor Senior Center | (440) 974-5725
Thursday, May 14 • 10 a.m. | Wickliffe Public Library | (440) 944-6010

Lake County’s Aging and Disability Resource Center

Your go-to for senior resources

As of 2026, Lake County, Ohio, is experiencing a significant demographic shift with a large, growing senior population. Approximately 21% of residents are aged 65 or older, with projections indicating that by 2030, one in three residents will be 60+. With statistics like that, the Lake County Council on Aging could not be prouder to be the home of Lake County’s very own Aging and Disability Resource Center, otherwise known as the ADRC.

The ADRC uses a person-centered, community-based approach that promotes independence and dignity for individuals, provides easy access to information to assist consumers, and offers resources and services that support those with disabilities, seniors, and family caregivers. We provide information and resources through our curated resource database, designed for Lake County seniors and those 18+ with disabilities.

Our ADRC is part of the Aging and Disability Resource Network, which spans Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina counties in Northeast Ohio.

Let’s look at the many benefits of having an Aging and Disability Resource Center in our very own community!

Information and assistance: Our Information & assistance special-

ists (I&As) will link you to the resources and support you need to improve your health, independence, and quality of life. You may also see one of our I&As during monthly outreach visits to our local senior centers and at numerous community outreach events throughout the year.

Benefits assistance: Our benefits specialist will screen you for state and federal assistance programs, including the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Savings Programs, and Medicaid. The benefits specialist, who is OSHIIP-trained and certified, also provides free, unbiased information and counseling to help you better understand your Medicare options.

Options counseling: Our options counselor assists you, your family, or caregivers in making informed decisions about long-term care services and supports. Whether you want to explore in-home services or look into a senior living facility, our options counselor considers your values, preferences, and finances to help create a long-term care plan that fits your needs.

To learn more call us at (440) 205-8111 or visit us in person during our business hours, M–F from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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By Jackie Oliverio, Manager, Aging and Disability Resource Center, Lake County Council on Aging

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

In anticipation of the 2026 season of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), we want to remind eligible Lake County seniors about the changes the program made back in 2024. At the Ohio Department of Aging's (ODA) direction, the SFMNP went entirely electronic, including an online-only application process and offering the \$50 benefit on a physical card or through a smartphone app.

Here are some frequently asked questions we receive, along with answers to help you as the 2026 program gets underway:

What is SFMNP? It is a federally funded program administered by the USDA and the Ohio Department of Aging that provides older adults (ages 60 and older and at or below 185% of the federal poverty level) with a \$50 benefit to purchase locally grown vegetables, fruit, honey, and fresh herbs.

When can I apply for SFMNP? The Lake County Council on Aging anticipates receiving 2026 updates sometime in late April and/or when the ODA releases 2026 SFMNP program details. We plan to share any updates we receive on our



agency's website (www.lcco.org) and on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/lakecountycouncilonaging).

How can I apply? The online application will be available on the Ohio Department of Aging's website at www.aging.ohio.gov/SFMNP sometime in late April. The program typically runs from May 15 through November 30.

I don't have a computer or smartphone. How can I apply? Once the 2026 application is available online, staff at the Lake County Council on Aging will be available to help seniors apply. If you participated in 2025 and used the card, please have it available at the time of application. We will need the ID number from your card. If you are new to the program or misplaced your card from previous years, we can assist you with applying for a new one. For assistance with the application process, please call the Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111.

Apply for HEAP to save on heating bills

Although spring has sprung in north-east Ohio, this does not always mean warmer temperatures immediately. The recent drop from 75 degrees one day to 25 and snow the next is a testament to that! So unfortunately, this means you may still be running your heat this time of year!

The Ohio Department of Development and the Lake County Council on Aging want to remind older Ohioans that assistance is available to help with their home energy bills. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps Ohioans at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of up to eight members and 60% of the state median income for a household of nine or more members to pay their heating bills.

Applied directly to the customer's utility or bulk fuel bill, the benefit can help manage heating costs. Older Ohioans may go to their local area agency on aging office for help with assembling the required documents and completing their HEAP application. They may also visit energyhelp.ohio.gov to apply online or to down-

load a copy of the application.

When applying, individuals need to have copies of the following documents:

- Most recent utility bills.
- A list of all household members (including birth dates and Social Security numbers).
- Proof of income for the past 30 days for all household members (12 months for certain income types).
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members.
- Proof of disability (if applicable).

Applications for the HEAP program must be received by May 31, 2026. If you need immediate assistance with your energy bills or have received a shut-off notice, please contact your local energy assistance provider, Lifeline, Inc., at (440) 354-2148.

For more information or assistance with applying for a HEAP benefit, contact the Lake County Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111. Appointments are strongly encouraged to guarantee staff availability.

Remember the Council on Aging in your estate!

To leave a bequest is to make a permanent statement of your values. It is by this act of charity that the world will remember what you cared about and what you stood for. If providing for seniors matters to you, consider a gift to the Lake County Council on Aging in your estate plans.

Call Kip Jochum at (440) 205-8111, ext. 257 to get started today.



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Senior Day at the Mall

Mark your calendar for this special event as we celebrate the seniors of Lake County. This year's event takes place at the Great Lakes Mall on Tuesday, May 19 and the theme is "The Power of Belonging."

Lake County seniors are invited to come for a special day of activities, annual "outstanding senior awards," and great fellowship. Tickets for will be available from the Council on Aging and each of the Lake County senior centers beginning April for only \$1 each. Tickets are also available at the door on the day of the event.

Guests will be welcomed beginning at 8:30 a.m. with light snacks and Gloria Jean's Coffees. Dozens of sponsors and vendors will be on hand throughout the day to offer educational information and material on services available for seniors and their caregivers.

Activities begin with bingo in the food court from 9–10 a.m. Then, guests will then have plenty of

time to visit vendor booths before awards and entertainment. Entertainment will begin at 11:30, followed by proclamations from the Board of Lake County Commissioners at 12:30 p.m. during a special program recognizing Lake County outstanding seniors.

The Senior Services Levy Committee works to raise funds to support the Lake County Senior Services Levy, which has been operating since 1992. The levy supports many of the county's senior services such as home-delivered meals, social work services, home repairs and modifications, senior center programming and Adult Protective Services. Fundraising events like Senior Day at the Mall help to ensure successful future campaigns.

Transportation to Senior Day at the Mall is available through Laketrans by calling (440) 354-6100. Please consider celebrating aging in Lake County by attending this year's event on May 19!

Project Hope for the Homeless Hope House: Overcoming Obstacles

Hope House, a program of Project Hope for the Homeless, is a transitional housing initiative designed to support community members age 62 and older who are experiencing homelessness. Through its aftercare services, seniors may receive subsidized or no-cost housing for up to 90 days in a safe, supportive environment while preparing to transition into independent living.

Hope House provides 24/7 shelter along with personalized case management to help residents connect with local resources across Lake County. The Aftercare Coordinator works closely with community partners to ensure seniors can access the services they need to regain stability and independence. Residents benefit from:

- Daily Meals on Wheels provided in partnership with the Lake County Council on Aging
- Transportation assistance to

medical appointments and grocery stores

- Guidance, goal planning, and referrals for housing, health, and basic needs
- Monthly assistance with household chores

The impact of Hope House is reflected in a recent success story. One senior who became disabled lost both income and housing and entered the adult shelter. During the lengthy process of securing disability benefits, he transitioned into Hope House, where he obtained part-time employment and actively pursued accessible housing options.

He ultimately moved into a senior apartment complex suited to his needs. With support from the Welcome Home Center and ongoing aftercare services, he was able to successfully rebuild a stable and independent life.

Learn more at projecthopeforthehomeless.org.

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AARP Smart Driver Course returns to Council on Aging Thursday, May 7

Now is a great time to sharpen driving skills by participating in the AARP Smart Driver program, presented through a partnership between AARP and the Lake County Council on Aging. Lake County residents age 50 and over are eligible for the workshop which will take place on Thurs., May 7, from 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Council on Aging office, 8520 East Avenue in Mentor.

There will be a half-hour break for lunch which will be made available for registered participants that day. Those attending will learn defensive driving techniques and strategies, review new traffic laws, rules of the road and more in the four hour course. They will discover how to adjust their driving to age related changes in vision, hearing, and reaction time through an interactive discussion about the changing technology on newer

vehicles and the warning signs that suggest it's time to give up the keys.

Drivers who successfully complete the AARP course could be eligible for a car insurance discount.

The main thrust of the course is about giving drivers every possible advantage now, and as they age, to be able to continue to drive safely for as long as they can. There is no exam, and all work is in the classroom.

Seating is limited. Class fees are \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for nonmembers. Reserve a spot today by calling the Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111. Attendees are asked to bring their driver's license and AARP card to the class. Acceptable payment methods include cash or check. Please do not mail cash or check prior to attending, as all payments will be taken at the time of the class.

Valentine's Day card delivery

The Council on Aging wishes to extend its most sincere thanks to groups of local school students, educators and community coordinators who partnered in collectively handcrafting several hundred Valentine's Day cards that were distributed to Meals on Wheels recipients along with their Feb. 13 hot meal delivery.

These contributors donated countless hours of their time and creative energy into one-of-a-kind cards that surely brightened a senior/homebound community members day! Their thoughtfulness helped spread love and connection where it is needed most!



The Greater Cleveland Food Bank offers food and support to older adults facing hunger

The Greater Cleveland Food Bank wants to remind Lake County seniors that we are here to help with food and essential resources.

High costs of living can make it difficult to afford necessities like groceries, medication, and utilities. No one should have to choose between a warm home and a nutritious meal. That's why the Food Bank and its network of over 1,000 partner agencies, like local pantries and hot meal programs, work tirelessly to ensure that nourishing food is available close to home.

For our senior community, the Food Bank offers targeted programs, including:

- Senior boxes (CSFP): Monthly boxes of nutritious, shelf-stable foods designed specifically for seniors.
- Senior markets: Distributions of fresh, healthy produce and perishable items at senior-specific



locations like apartment complexes and centers.

- Senior meals: Prepared, nutritious meals at on-site programs.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please give our Help Center a call at (216) 738-2067. We are available Monday–Friday from 7 a.m.– 6 p.m. You can also visit GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org/Map for an interactive map to find local food pantries and hot meals in your neighborhood.



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Vial of Life

Emergency preparedness in a pouch

The Vial of Life is an emergency-preparedness program offered by the Lake County Council on Aging. This program consists of a small kit that is designed to speak for you when you can't speak for yourself.

This kit includes the senior's medical information, which can assist emergency personnel in administering the proper medical treatment. A red, magnetized pouch is placed on the individual's refrigerator, where first responders can readily locate the information.

For more information and to request a Vial of Life for yourself or a loved one, call the Lake County Council on Aging at (440) 205-8111.



Gambling and Aging:

Knowing when fun becomes a problem

As we age, staying socially connected and mentally engaged is important for overall well-being. For many, activities like bingo, lottery tickets, casinos, and online games can feel like harmless entertainment or a way to pass time. However, for some, gambling can quietly turn into a form of stress, financial strain, or emotional hardship.

Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers understand that gambling affects seniors differently than younger adults. That's why we offer free, confidential, education and treatment. Our programs focus on helping you stay informed, feel confident setting personal limits, and explore healthier ways to stay engaged and connected.

Help is available, and no one has to face this alone. Whether you are worried about your own gambling habits, or those of a loved one, all problem gambling services are free and confidential for individuals affected by gambling, as well as their family members. Our programs are designed to meet you with compassion, dignity, and respect. By raising awareness and offering sup-



port, we aim to help older adults maintain independence, stability and peace of mind.

For more information call (440) 255-0678 or email info@lgrc.us.

Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers provides a wide range of services for individuals and families struggling with substance abuse or addiction, mental health concerns or problem gambling. At every level from prevention to residential recovery services, we offer a message of hope to individuals, families, and the entire community.

Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers is a private, nonprofit agency providing continuous service to the community since 1971. Services at Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers are made possible due to the generous support of the Lake County ADAMHS Board, the Geauga Board of MHRS, and United Way of Lake & Geauga counties.

Salvation Army Goldenaires

The 2026 season of Goldenaires is underway! Goldenaires is a program for adults aged 55 and up, meeting once a month at The Salvation Army in Painesville. Seniors from across Lake County gather for a delicious dinner and the joy of sharing time with friends. Each month, attendees also enjoy outstanding musical performances, featuring both local groups and talented artists from other states.

Goldenaires is free for seniors, who are encouraged to contribute a donation for dinner and a free-will offering for the performers. In June, members celebrate with a picnic, including an outdoor concert and food boxes from our pantry. During the holidays, the program hosts the Madison Chorus, who arrive in Victorian attire

to preview their annual Christmas concert, along with distributing Christmas food boxes to older adults.

Past and upcoming musical guests have included Gospel Friends, Jerry Garcia, Lake Metroparks Showbiz Kids, and The Babbs. This spring, Goldenaires welcomes Chip and Nikki Headley on April 17, Mentor Music Makers on May 22, and Juanita Phillips and Corey Clark at the June 19 picnic.

A monthly newsletter keeps members updated on upcoming events. Anyone wishing to join the mailing list or RSVP for a program can call (440) 354-3774.

Goldenaires seniors know how to have fun—good, clean fun—and we hope you'll want to join in!

SAVE THE DATE!
5th Annual
Lake County
World Elder Abuse
Awareness Day Walk

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2026
11:45 a.m.
Lake County Job & Family Services
177 Main St., Painesville

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Free bus rides bring more freedom to Lake County older adults

Laketran and the Lake County Commissioners are expanding a popular transportation program that is helping older adults stay active, independent, and connected.

The Seniors on the Go program, launched in May 2025, originally provided fare-free rides on Laketrans' Dial-a-Ride service. Now, the program has been expanded to include free rides on Laketrans' Local Routes 1-9, giving seniors even more flexibility to travel throughout Lake County.

Since its launch, Seniors on the Go has provided more than 25,000 trips for older residents traveling to senior centers, libraries, parks, grocery stores, food pantries, fitness centers, barber shops, salons, and pharmacies. The addition of Local Routes means seniors who are able to get to a nearby bus stop can ride without making advance reservations.

For many riders, that flexibility makes a meaningful difference.

Willoughby resident Terry Fore-

man, a regular Laketrans rider, encouraged the agency to expand the program. While Dial-a-Ride offers important door-to-door service, he noted that not all seniors need that level of assistance. The Local Routes allow for more spontaneous travel and greater independence.

Laketran Board President Brian Falkowski said the expansion reflects the agency's commitment to listening to riders and adapting services to meet their needs. By adding fare-free access to Local Routes, Laketrans is giving seniors more choice in how and when they travel.

To participate in Seniors on the Go, residents must complete a Reduced Fare Application and provide proof of eligibility. Once approved, seniors receive a pass through Laketrans' EZfare mobile app or an EZfare smartcard, allowing them to board local routes at no cost.

For more info, visit laketrans.com or call (440) 350-1000.

Start your tour for tacos!

The Lake County Taco Trail is a flavorful way to celebrate the county's vibrant Hispanic community, inviting visitors to explore authentic flavors and creative takes on a beloved classic. Designed to be enjoyed over time, the trail encourages you to savor each stop at your own pace while discovering locally-owned favorites across the county.

Taco styles range from familiar to unexpected. At Azteca, you'll find classic crowd-pleasers like al pastor, barbacoa, carnitas, and garlic shrimp tacos served on your choice of corn or flour tortillas. Señor Masa brings a more inventive approach, featuring thoughtfully crafted tacos made with house-made corn tortillas and creative flavor combinations that push beyond the traditional. For a customizable experience, Wild Burrito offers build-your-own tacos with a variety of proteins and toppings, making



it easy to tailor each bite to your taste.

The Taco Trail pass adds an interactive element to the experience. Check in at participating locations to earn points and after you visit 10 to 12 locations you'll get a FREE Taco Trail t-shirt! As the trail continues to evolve with new stops and updates, it's worth revisiting often to see what's new.

Whether you're returning to a favorite taqueria or discovering a new go-to taco, the Taco Trail is a delicious way to explore Lake County, one bite at a time.

Sign up to traverse the Taco Trail at elcaminodetacos.com.

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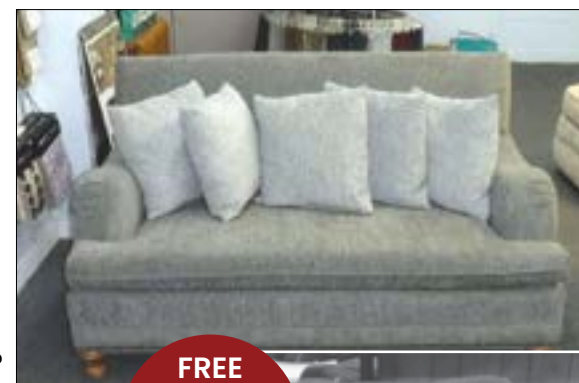


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