



FROM THE CEO, DREW DYSON

Older Americans Month

Dear Friends,

Martin was tenacious. He was adventurous. He was bold. He was everything I hope to be in the later years of my life. I met Martin in 1995, when he was in his late eighties. He was a member of my first congregation, and we quickly became friends. He learned to ski in his seventies, went skydiving on his eightieth birthday, and took his great-great grandchildren to ride rollercoasters. He personified the theme for Older Americans Month 2023, “aging unbound!”

Established in 1963, Older Americans Month (OAM) is celebrated every May. Led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), OAM is a time for us to acknowledge the contributions and achievements of older Americans, highlight important trends, and strengthen our commitment to honoring our older citizens. Locally, Mayor Freda, Councilwoman Niedergang, and their colleagues on the Princeton council proclaimed May 2023 as “Older Americans Month...urge(ing) every resident to celebrate our older citizens, help create an inclusive society, and accept the challenge of flexible thinking around aging.”

This month, we invite you to join us as we recognize the sixtieth anniversary of OAM and challenge the narrative on aging. Here are some ways we can all participate in **Aging Unbound**:



- Embrace the opportunity to change. Find a new passion, go on an adventure, and push boundaries by not letting age define your limits. Invite creativity and purpose into your life by trying new activities to bring in more growth, joy, and energy. This month we are offering a generative writing class, a “creating with clay” workshop, line dancing, and more!
- Explore the rewards of growing older. With age comes knowledge, which provides insight and confidence to understand and experience the world more deeply. Continue to grow that knowledge through reading, listening, classes, and creative activities. Join us for the screening of *Gatsby in Connecticut* with a post-screening discussion with award-winning director, Robert Steven Williams, the premier performance of OnStage Seniors’ 2023 production, a tech workshop on effective web usage, or one of our many other classes or activities.
- Stay engaged in your community. Everyone benefits when everyone is connected and involved. Stay active by volunteering, working, mentoring, participating in social clubs, and taking part in activities in the community.
- Form relationships. As an essential ingredient of well-being, relationships can enhance your quality of life by introducing new ideas and unique perspectives. Invest time with people to discover deeper connections with family, friends, and community members. At PSRC, join one of our conversational small groups, such as Aging Gaily (LGBTQ+), Forever Young (55–65), Transitions to Retirement, or Let’s Talk (or many others listed on page 15).

Martin wasn’t only incredibly fun and full of life, he was also a man of substance whose vulnerability left a profound mark on my life. A veteran of World-War II and a father who lost his young adult son, Martin was open about his own struggles with depression and mental illness. It was his belief that by sharing openly about his own struggles and treatment, he would help break down the stigma around mental illness.

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According to recent studies released by the American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, more than 27% of older adults assessed by aging service providers met the criteria for a diagnosis of major depression and another 31% of older adults had symptoms of depression that didn't rise to diagnosis, but significantly impacted their lives. Similarly, the study found that 14% of older adults meet the criteria for a diagnosable anxiety disorder while another 27% had symptoms of anxiety that didn't meet diagnostic criteria but appreciably affected their day-to-day life.

As May is also National Mental Health Awareness Month, it is a good opportunity to remind ourselves that mental health is an important component of "aging unbound." Certainly, practices of self-care, such as exercise, good sleep habits, practicing gratitude, and staying connected with others are important aspects of fostering positive mental health. It is equally important to monitor your mental health, looking for signs or distressing symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, appetite changes, difficulty concentrating, or loss of interest in people or activities. Don't wait until these symptoms become overwhelming. Instead, reach out for help. Reach out to our social services team. Talk to your primary care doctor. Connect with a counselor. All can get you connected to a mental health professional for assessment and treatment.

Martin taught me that aging was truly something worth embracing. He also taught me the importance of good mental health and the power of vulnerability to destigmatize mental illness and treatment. I am grateful for his presence in my life — and I wish for you the power of *aging unbound!*

All the Best,
Drew A. Dyson, PhD
Chief Executive Officer