Storytelling for Older Americans Month (OAM) 2019

Sharing stories about how older Americans are valuable to our nation’s social fabric can help communities recognize their importance and garner more support. For OAM, we offer some ideas to help you craft stories to highlight older adults in your community and share ways your community or organization is serving this important segment of our population.

# Creating a Good Story

* **Develop a story hook.** This is the newsworthy message is the reason you chose to create the story. Example: National Public Radio [recently shared news about an 84-year-old woman](https://www.npr.org/2019/04/05/710417769/such-great-heights-84-year-old-pole-vaulter-keeps-raising-the-bar) who won several medals for track sports and pole vaulting. What makes her story newsworthy is the message that it’s never too late to set goals.
* **Include relevant facts.** Information from reliable sources adds credibility to your story. Statistics or a quote from an influencer can reinforce the authenticity of your message. Example: If your organization has completed a project or event that benefits older adults, include information about outcomes or attendance.
* **Keep the story focused.** Whether you are telling a story about a person, topic, or organization, make sure it’s clear to the reader who or what they are reading about. Example: If you are writing about the Executive Director, focus on that person’s goals and achievements without going off on too many tangents about the organization itself.

# Formatting Tips

* **Develop a primary message**. What is the main point you want the reader to take away? Whether it’s a fact, call to action, or resource, don’t bury your primary message. Introduce it at the start, reinforce it throughout the narrative, and close with why it’s important.
* **Build a structure**. Even strong writers can struggle without an outline. Include basic content details or keywords for an introduction, a closing paragraph, and 1-3 paragraphs dedicated to a resource or idea.
* **Keep it simple**. Content that is easy to read is more likely to hold a reader’s attention. Keep sentences brief and use conversational language. Aim for a 400-500-word story. You can always write another article that includes more information.
* **Open and close strong**. A compelling opening paragraph entices the reader to pay attention. A concise closing paragraph that reinforces the main message and call to action helps readers retain what they have read.
* **Be personal**. Don’t be afraid to let the reader know the person behind the story. Emotions, personal insight, and opinions can make your story more relatable, even if the paragraphs in between contain data, resources, and other impersonal information.

# Ideas for OAM Storytelling

*Fact #1: In 2000, 46 million Americans were over the age of 60. By 2020, that number will increase to more than 77 million. To prepare for the future, we must invest today in the network of services that will support the growing number of older adults.*

Story Ideas:

* How is our nation equipped to keep the growing number of older adults feeling supported, respected, and engaged?
* What are the services my organization provides to older Americans and why are they important for our community?
* What are some innovative solutions my community or family has to support older adults?

*Fact #2: Benjamin Franklin invented the bifocal lens at 78. Actress Rita Moreno has had a career spanning seven decades and currently stars in a Netflix series at 87. Grandma Moses started painting at 76. Every day, older adults put their heads, hearts, and hands into activities that make our communities better places to live.*

Story Ideas:

* Is there an older adult in my family or community who is giving back by sharing their talents, skills, or interests?
* Is there an older adult in my family who has checked off a “bucket list” item?
* Is there an older adult who has an interesting, unusual, or extraordinary life story to share?

*Fact #3: Over the next 11 years, 1 in 5 seniors will transition to retirement. That doesn’t mean they’re done contributing to their communities. In many cases, they are just beginning!*

Story Ideas:

* What is the retirement rate in my community and what related opportunities are available?
* Is there an older adult in my community or family who has embarked on a second career post-retirement?

# Connect Online

We invite you to share your stories about the ways older Americans are supported and valued in your community. Follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/aclgov) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ACLgov) to join the conversation and access resources all month long. Use the hashtags #OAM19 and #ConnectCreateContribute when posting to social media so everyone can be inspired by your stories during OAM.

# Official OAM Resources

* [Resource list to help you Connect, Create, and Contribute](https://acl.gov/oam/2019/resources)
* [Article and proclamation templates](https://acl.gov/oam/2019/templates)
* [Posters, logos, and other graphic resources](https://acl.gov/oam/2019/materials)