



**The National
Resource Center on
Nutrition & Aging**

**MAKE YOUR MARK: NUTRITION
AND SOCIALIZATION**

MARCH 4, 2020



**The National
Resource Center on
Nutrition & Aging**

INTRODUCTIONS

WELCOME

Keri Ann Lipperini, MPA

Director

Office of Nutrition and Health
Promotion Programs (ONHPP)

Administration on Aging
Administration for Community Living

U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

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**The National
Resource Center on
Nutrition & Aging**

SENIOR VIGNETTE #1

Felicita

<https://youtu.be/EMgNPqH8Ee8>



**The National
Resource Center on
Nutrition & Aging**

**MAKE YOUR MARK – ENHANCE
SOCIALIZATION AND NUTRITION**

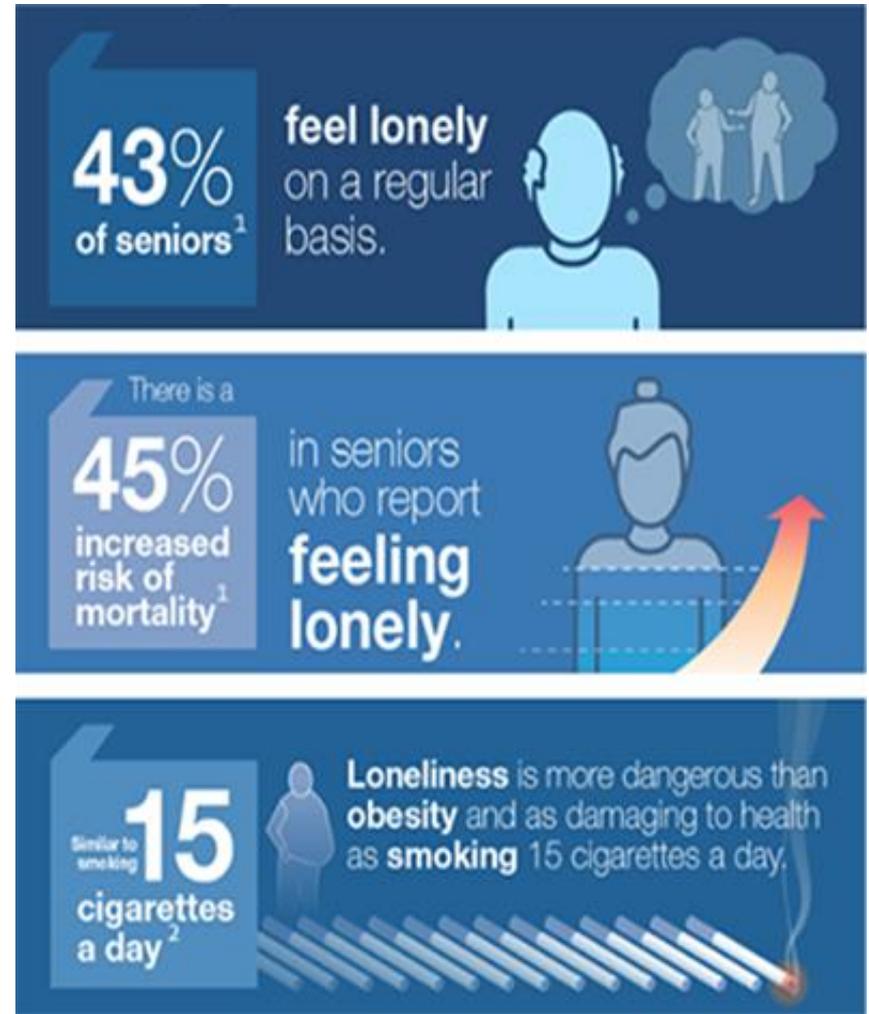
“Living Connected”

**Baltimore County Department of
Aging
Baltimore, MD**



LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

- BCDA's 2019 initiative was "Living Connected."
- Purpose was to raise awareness about social isolation and provide opportunities for older adults to connect to the community
- Research has demonstrated the negative health effects of isolation and loneliness



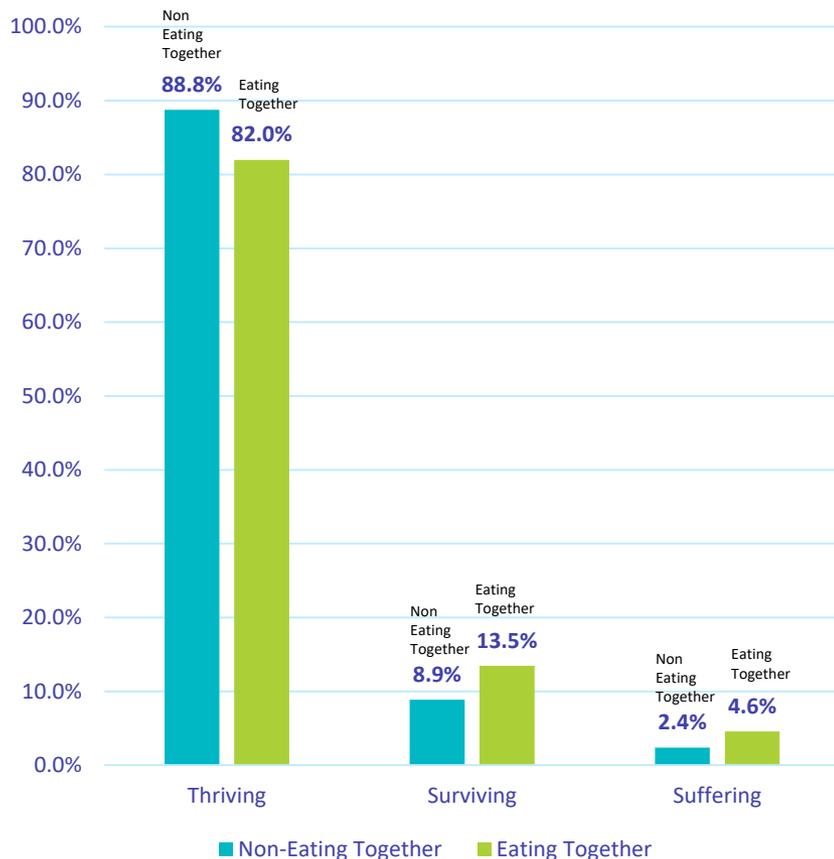
LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

- In Baltimore County, the Adult Wellbeing Assessment conducted in partnership with NCOA provides us with good data on social and behavioral determinants of health
- We are able to segment the center member data to compare participants in our Eating Together congregate meal program and non-participants
- Results show that congregate meal participants are significantly more likely to be “suffering” or “surviving” on all measures, as opposed to thriving like the non-meal participants ($p < 0.05$), with the exception of meaning and purpose, where there was no significant difference

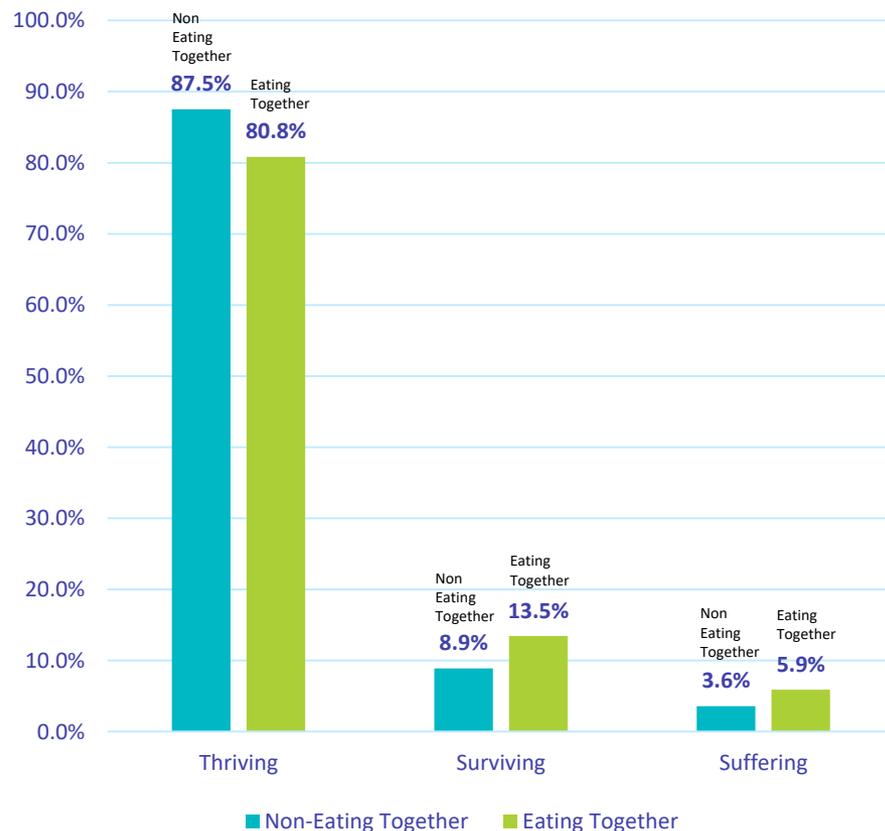


LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

Life Satisfaction*



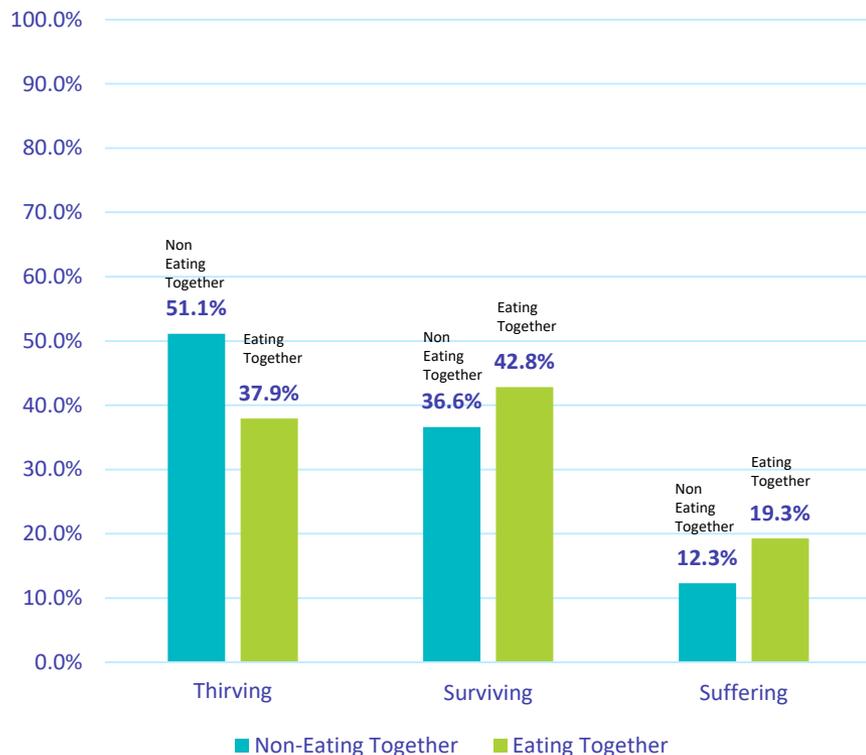
Life Optimism (2 years in future)*



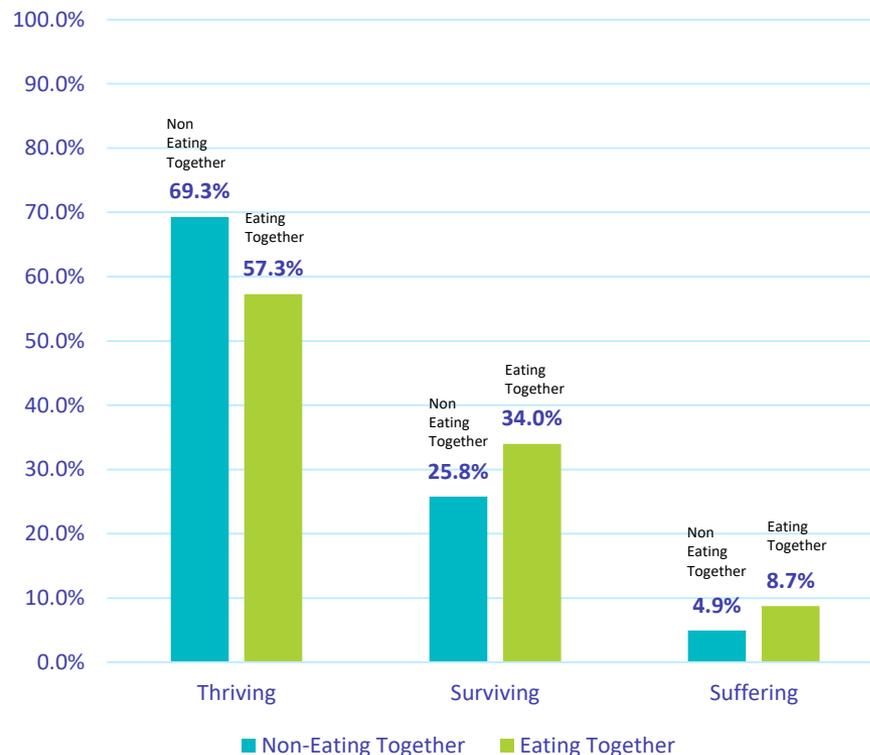
*p<0.05

LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

Physical Wellbeing*



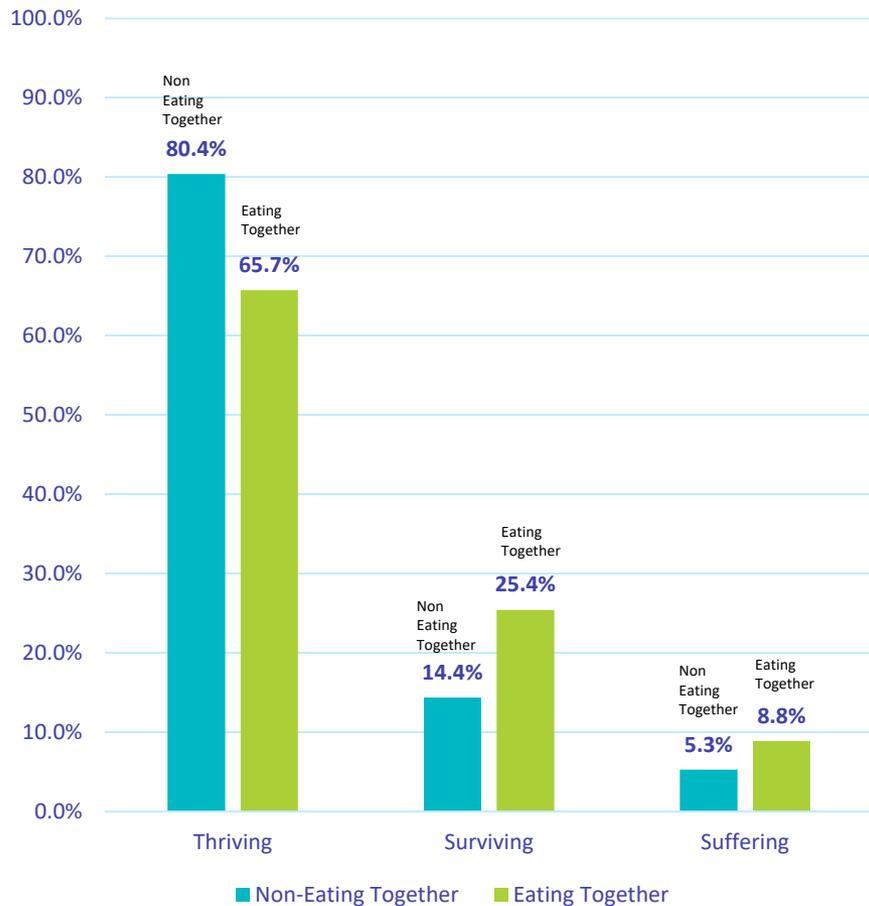
Mental Wellbeing*



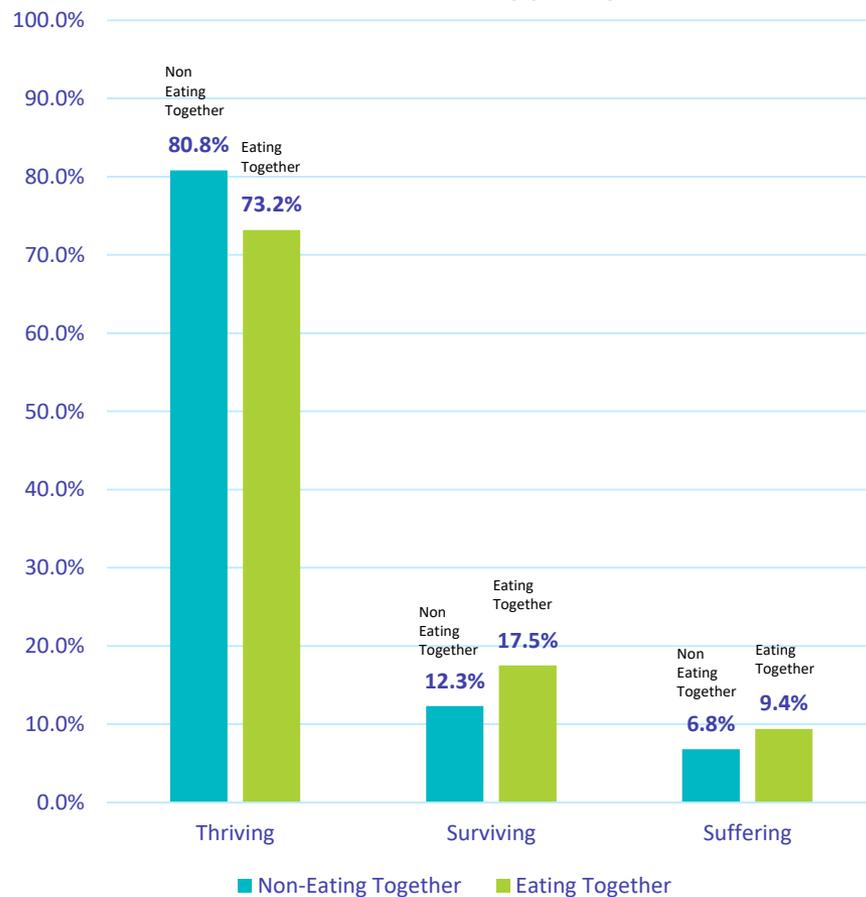
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LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

Financial Wellbeing*



In general, how often do you get the social and emotional support you need?*

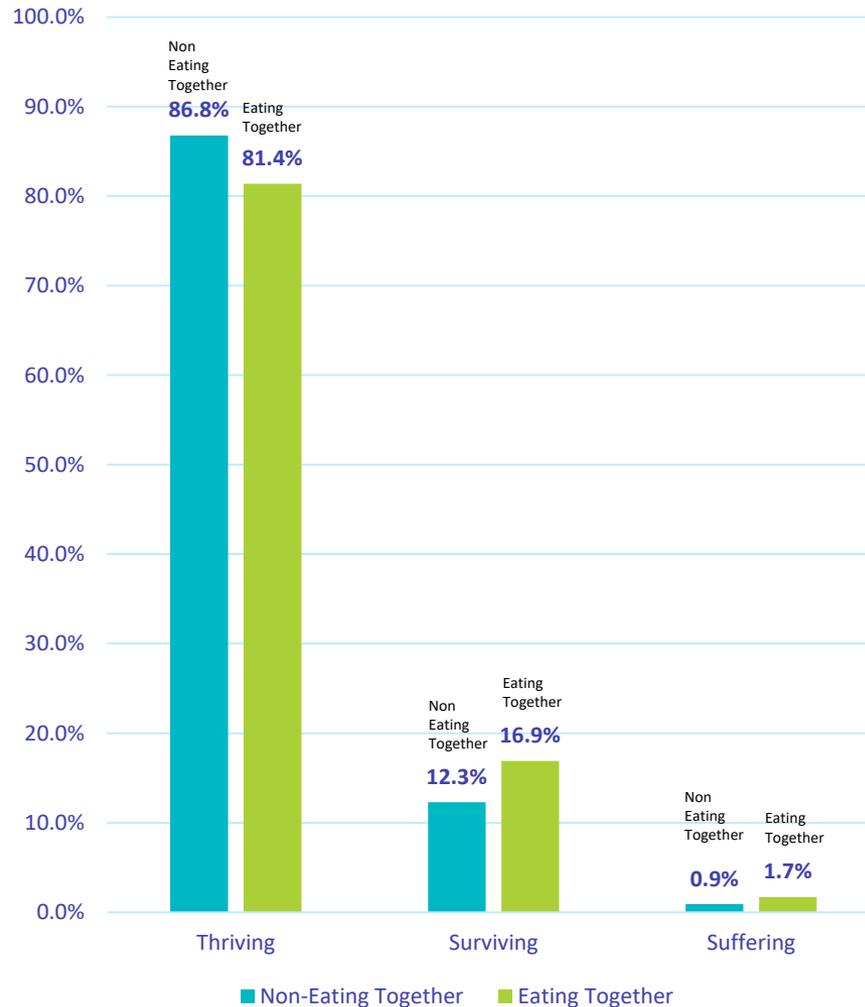


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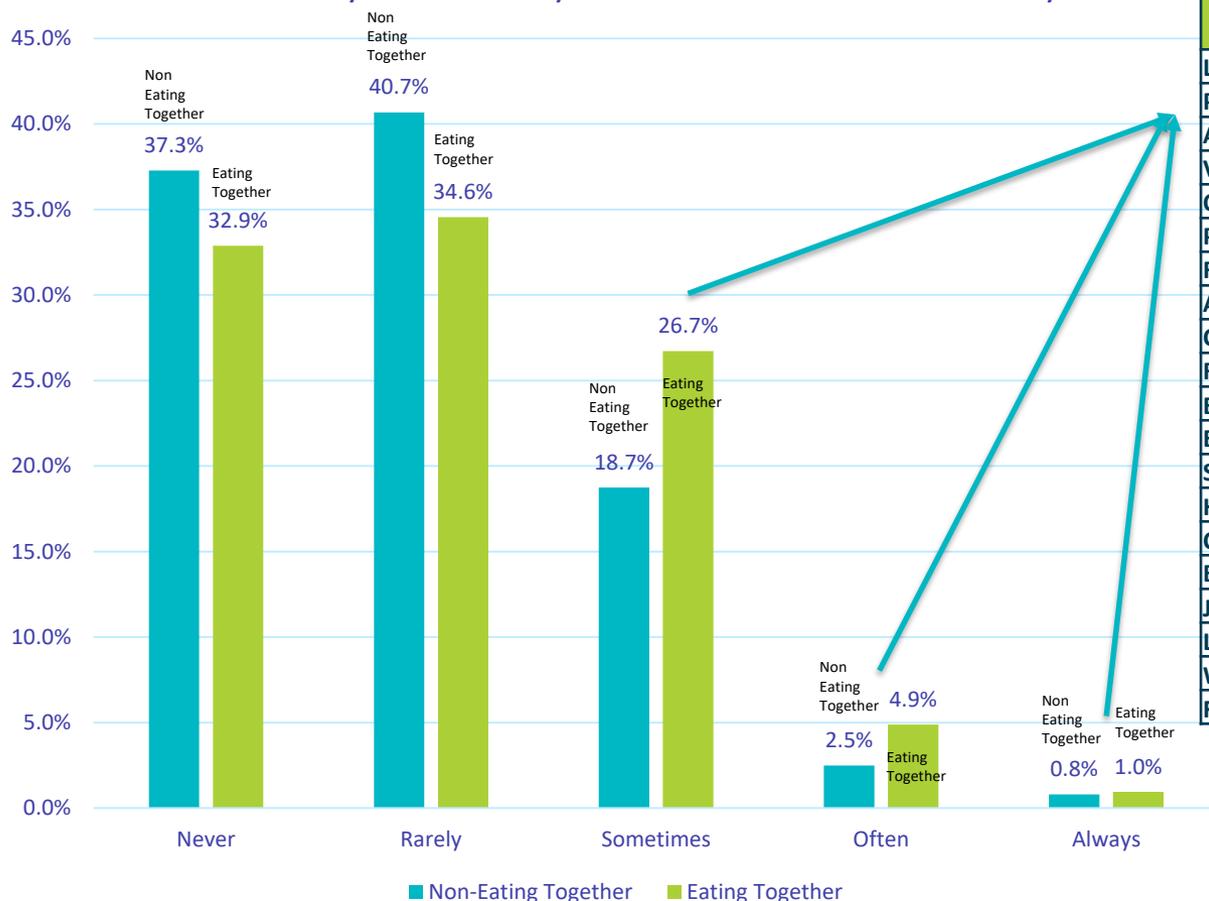
LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.



LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

How often do you feel lonely or isolated from those around you?

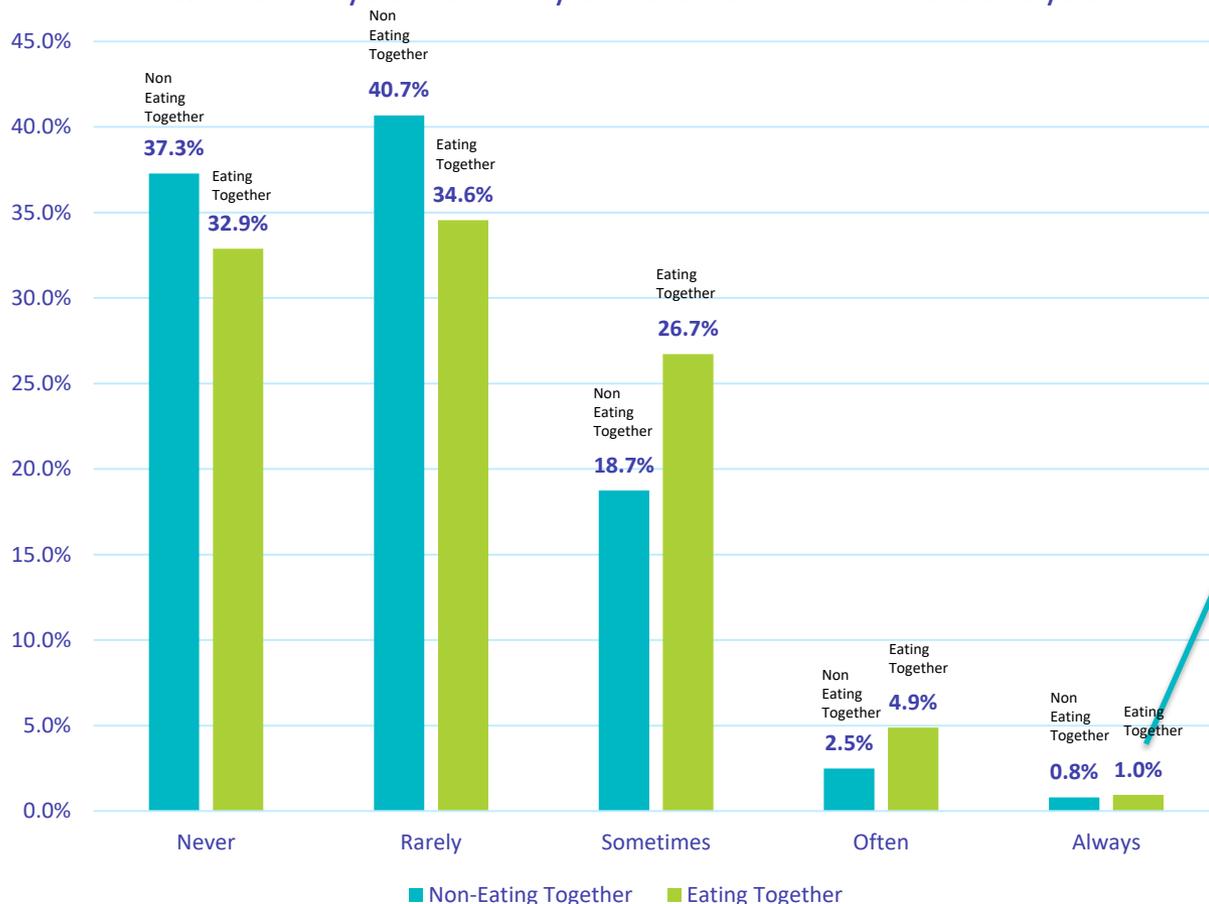


Senior Center	Percentage of Members Who Are Sometimes, Often or Always Lonely
Lansdowne	40.0%
Pikesville	29.7%
Ateaze	29.4%
Victory Villa	27.1%
Overlea	26.5%
Parkville	25.9%
Reisterstown	25.2%
Arbutus	25.0%
Catonsville	24.8%
Rosedale	24.1%
Essex	23.9%
Edgemere	23.0%
Seven Oaks	22.6%
Hereford	21.0%
Cockeysville	19.8%
Bykota	19.2%
Jacksonville	18.9%
Liberty	18.5%
Woodlawn	18.2%
Fleming	18.0%

Can segment data by senior center and deliver programs and screenings to address social isolation.

LIVING LONGER * LIVING WELL * LIVING CONNECTED

How often do you feel lonely or isolated from those around you?



ARBUTUS SENIOR CENTER
MILLS, R.
ATEAZE SENIOR CENTER
CONRAD, C.
CATONSVILLE SENIOR CENTER
CASSIZI, M.
MOLONEY, R.
COCKEYSVILLE SENIOR CENTER
CLARKE, J.
GRIM, D.
ESSEX SENIOR CENTER
CZEBOTAR, C.
LIBERTY SENIOR CENTER
HAVERSTEIN, T.
PARKVILLE SENIOR CENTER
RICHARDSON, S.
REISTERSTOWN SENIOR CENTER
MALLORY-HUGHS, B.
VICTORY VILLA SENIOR CENTER
PAROL, A.

Can drill down further as BCDA social work staff can now follow up with specific individuals who may be at higher risk.

NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

- September 12, 2019
- Goal was to publicize the problem of social isolation and encourage all members of the community to share a meal with an older adult



- Idea started with just the congregate meal program, but then quickly expanded to engage community partners



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

Want To Be A Community Partner?

Resources, tools and icebreakers can be found on the webpage.



Call 410-887-3052

to register as a partner or visit

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/aging/nosenioreatsalone.html>



Baltimore County Executive John J. O'Keefe, Jr.
and the County Council



- ♥ Sign up for a meal at a local senior center or senior housing facility. Invite someone to join if you already attend.
- ♥ Invite someone to join you for a meal at a restaurant or home, and offer transportation if you can.
- ♥ Share a meal with an older adult, if you work or volunteer with them.
- ♥ Host a special meal with activities/entertainment through local churches, community centers and organizations.
- ♥ Provide a discount at restaurants or offer a special price for seniors on event day.
- ♥ Promote the event through your friends, family and local organizations.

No Senior Eats Alone Day



LIVING CONNECTED

September 12, 2019



Sharing meals together improves health, happiness and social connection!

Sponsored by



Baltimore County Department of Aging

Used social media, print media, television outreach, websites, and fliers in senior centers to share messages about NSEAD© and social isolation



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

The Baltimore County Department of Aging is inviting everyone to make older adults feel included and valued on No Senior Eats Alone Day. We are looking for partners to join us in drawing attention to the impact of social isolation.

Partners can be:

- ♥ Individuals
- ♥ Businesses
- ♥ Churches
- ♥ Community Groups
- ♥ Senior Housing
- ♥ Restaurants

Everyone is invited to share a meal with a senior by:

- ♥ Taking an older adult out to eat or preparing them a meal
- ♥ Providing a gathering space for older adults to eat together



No Senior Eats Alone Day is being promoted to help seniors feel connected, to establish better eating habits and to improve nutrition and health.

When older adults share a meal, it can...

1. Increase life expectancy
2. Improve mental health and cognitive status
3. Encourage more nutritious meals with higher satisfaction
4. Increase feelings of motivation to care for self

1. Decrease in high blood pressure and cholesterol
2. Lower feelings of depression and loneliness
3. Reduce risk for physical/psychological health decline
4. Decrease risk of falls due to better nutrition

Why Is No Senior Eats Alone Day Important?

When older adults are eating alone, they are...

2X As likely to be depressed

59% At higher risk of physical and mental health decline

79% More Likely to have greater feelings of isolation when eating alone

49% More likely if living alone to have poor nutritional habits increasing their risk of illness and hospitalization

Facts from the American College of Nutrition

MEALS ARE A GREAT CONNECTION!

Help make a difference one person at a time for the 190,000 older adults over 60 years of age in Baltimore County.



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

Activities included:

- **Breakfast, lunch, dinner and happy hour events** hosted at 20 senior centers and 15 nutrition sites. New participants were also welcome to join other programs and activities at the sites that day
- Senior Center members were encouraged to **bring their neighbors, friends and family to the center** for a meal, especially those that were isolated
- All senior center and nutrition site meals were funded via the congregate meal program
- Senior center social clubs hosted **meals at local restaurants** for members of the public who didn't want to come to the senior centers
- **BCDA staff brought and shared meals** with homebound clients
- Community partners offered **free meals, discounts or free menu items to anyone mentioning No Senior Eats Alone Day©**. Many of these sites also provided programs to encourage socialization and learning
- **Intergenerational events** were encouraged



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

Impact:

- **1,902** meals were served in senior centers and nutrition sites (usual total was 700)
- **40** community partners participated including restaurants, places of worship, schools, colleges, community associations, libraries and fitness centers
- Some locations were open to the public, while others were offered just to the partners' members
- A number of community “Champions” also joined to help promote the day and raise awareness of social isolation (including CHAI, Cigna, and a number of churches and schools)



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©

Examples of community events:

- Baltimore County staff, including police officers, volunteered at many sites as **conversation leaders** and visited isolated seniors in their homes
- Library offered a **lunch and learn** for 94 people
- Baltimore County Community College provide an **event-filled day** for 55 people
- Goucher College offered an **intergenerational program** for 20 people



*BCDA
Homebound
Clients*



NO SENIOR EATS ALONE DAY©



Reisterstown Senior Center



Goucher College



St. Ursula Church



Fleming Senior Center



Library



Goucher College



Save the Date!
No Senior Eats Alone Day® September 17, 2020

Jill Hall
Division Chief, Senior Centers and Community Services
Baltimore County Department Of Aging
jphall@baltimorecountymd.gov
410-887-5548
www.baltimorecountymd.gov/aging





THE VALUE OF SOCIALIZATION IN THE OAA CONGREGATE NUTRITION PROGRAM

BOB BLANCATO

rblancato@matzblancato.com

March 4, 2020

PURPOSES OF THE OAA

- The three purposes of the nutrition programs of OAA as stipulated in the law are to
 - (1) Reduce hunger and food insecurity,
 - (2) **Promote socialization of older individuals**, and
 - (3) Promote the health and well-being outcomes of older individuals by assisting them to access nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior



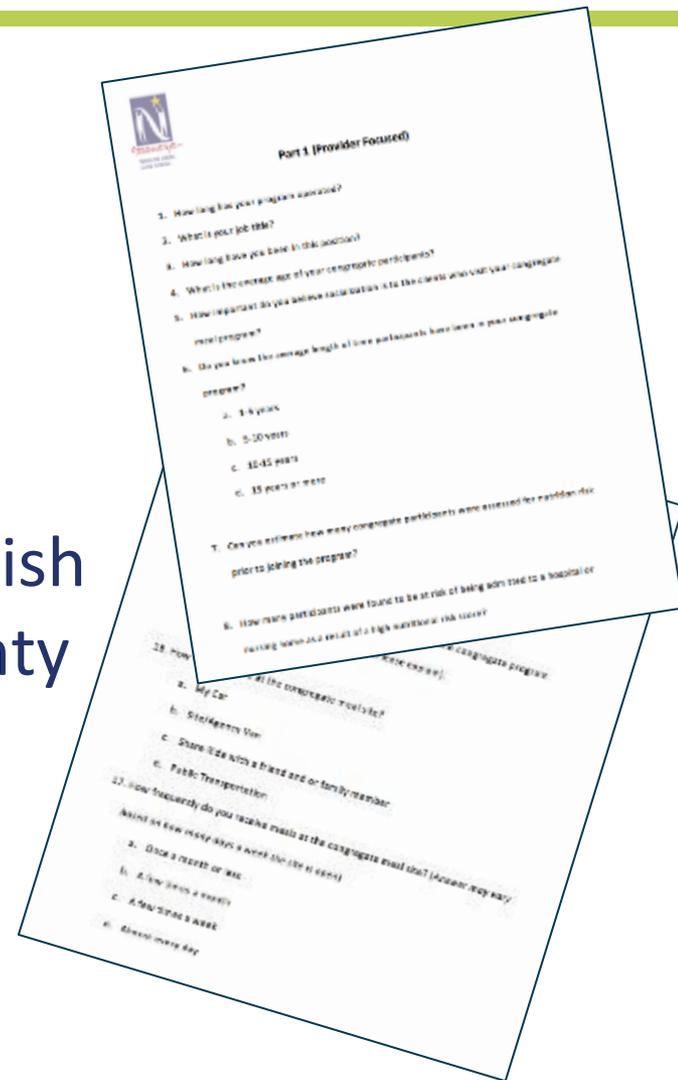
PRIOR RESEARCH

- Past research into the congregate nutrition program has focused on the meal that is provided as well as nutrition education
- **Little evaluation has ever been done solely on the benefits of socialization to the health and well being of older adults.**



NANASP SURVEY TOOL

- Provider Focused Questions (11 total)
- Participant Focused Questions (11 total)
- The tool was translated into Spanish by Meals on Wheels Orange County



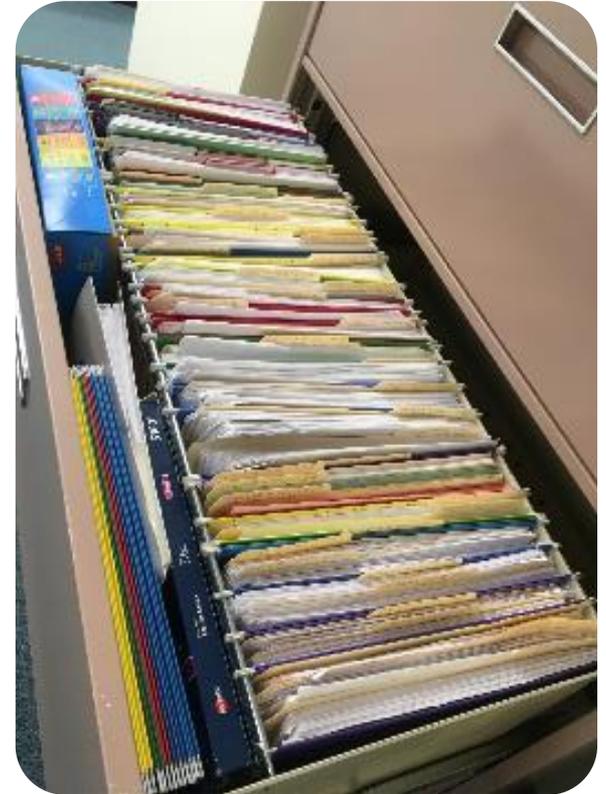
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What is your gender?
- What is your relationship status?
- What race/ethnicity best describes you?
- What do you like best about socializing during the congregate meal program?
- How do you arrive at the congregate meal site?
- How frequently do you receive meals at the congregate meal site?
- Since participating in the program, has your knowledge of good nutrition increased?
- Since participating in the program, are you exercising more?
- Has your health improved since you started visiting the congregate meal site?
- Do you have more friends now than before you started visiting the site?
- Do you believe enough time is allowed for socialization?



SURVEY COLLECTION ACROSS 3 YEARS

- More than 3,000 surveys collected from Congregate Nutrition Program sites
- 90 program provider surveys completed
- 12 states participated
- 25+ programs participated
- 5 Infographics created



STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

- Year 1
 - For those who said that “socialization is encouraged” at the congregate site, they were also **4 times more likely** to say they had a better knowledge of good nutrition and improved health since visiting the site.
- Year 2
 - For those who said they had more friends now than when they started visiting the site, they were also **3.96 times more likely** to say they now exercise more and **5.5 times more likely** to say they have improved health.



SURVEY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- “I just enjoy getting out and making new friends”
- “If not for the senior center I would be very lonely. It’s a blessing for people like me”
- “I come for the people as much as the food”
- “It is unbelievable how much we benefit and learn. It is so motivational”
- “I love seeing and participating, singing and listening to music on Thursdays”
- “Wish it was opened Saturday and Sunday”



GETTING PERSONAL

- Starting near the end of year 1, I began doing site visits to actual congregate sites, meeting staff and most importantly participants
- All told, spoke to more than 300 older adults mostly at the lunch table
- Started with same question—what is the main reason you come here when you do?
- Unofficially, more than 90 percent of respondents said “socialization” or words to that effect, and roughly the same percentage said they had made new friends
- The number of years they came to program ranged from 1 to as many as 35 with ages as old as 96
- Many, many great interactions and stories ranging from liver and onions being the favorite meal in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to a couple who got married at the site in Pahrump, Nevada, to seeing fathers and sons and mothers and daughters at the same site!



YEAR 1 INFOGRAPHIC

BEYOND THE MEAL

The Value of Socialization in Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Programs

Generous funding from the Retirement Research Foundation

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a grant in June 2015 for one year of studying the benefits of socialization in OAA funded Congregate Nutrition programs to the health and well being of older adults.

"I enjoy coming and socializing very much. Makes me feel better"



9

STATES PARTICIPATED
California, Connecticut,
Illinois, Montana, North
Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee,
Texas, Washington



15

**CONGREGATE
NUTRITION PROGRAMS
PARTICIPATED**



1,989

COMPLETED SURVEYS
from Congregate Nutrition
Program participants
were collected



57

COMPLETED SURVEYS
from Congregate Nutrition
Program providers
were collected

"I come for the people as much as the food"

FINDINGS

From the 1,989 surveys analyzed we found the following statistically significant information:

- Those who answered that "socialization is encouraged" at the Congregate site were also four times as likely to say they had a knowledge of good nutrition, had a knowledge of healthy eating habits and had experienced improved physical health since coming to the site
- Those who answered that they have "more friends now" than before they started at the site were also two times as likely to say that their physical health has improved since starting to visit the site

SITE VISITS

NANASP Executive Director Bob
Blancato also made in-person visits to:

- Aging & In-Home Services of
Northeast Indiana
- Meals on Wheels & Senior Outreach
Services, California
- Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging
and Wood County Committee on
Aging, Ohio
- WellMed Medical Management, Inc.,
Texas
- Pahrump Senior Center, Nevada

"If not for the senior center I would be very lonely. It's a blessing for people like me"



For more information visit www.nanasp.org or contact us at
(202) 682-6899 or info@nanasp.org

IN-PERSON SITE VISITS, YEAR 2

- Beverly Council on Aging, MA
- Seniors Resources of Guilford County, NC
- McBride Center, Knoxville, TN
- Area Agency on Aging (NACOG), Flagstaff, AZ
- Serving Seniors, San Diego, CA
- Food Bank of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
- Centralina Area Agency on Aging, Charlotte, NC
 - First visit with a congressional staff member, Josh Ward (Chief Field Representative for Sen. Richard Burr, then the Subcommittee Chair on the Senate HELP Committee)
- American Association of Retired Asians, Hanover Park, IL
- Brattleboro Senior Meals, VT
 - Joined by Outreach Representative for Sen. Sanders





YEAR 2 INFOGRAPHIC

BEYOND THE MEAL

The Value of Socialization in Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Programs

Generous funding from the Retirement Research Foundation

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a renewal grant in July 2017 for one year of continued study of the benefits of socialization in OAA-funded Congregate Nutrition programs to the health and well-being of older adults.

"I enjoy music, happy faces and education."



6

STATES PARTICIPATED
North Carolina, Maryland,
Illinois, Arizona, Texas,
Kentucky



10

CONGREGATE
NUTRITION PROGRAMS
PARTICIPATED



1,017

COMPLETED SURVEYS
from Congregate Nutrition
Program participants
were collected.



23

COMPLETED SURVEYS
from Congregate Nutrition
Program providers
were collected.

"I come to the program to know what's going on in life."

FINDINGS

From the 1,017 surveys analyzed we found the following statistically significant information:

- For those who said they had more friends now than before they started visiting the site, they were also 3.96 times more likely to say they now exercise more.
- For those who said they had more friends now than before they started visiting the site, they were also 5.5 times more likely to say they have improved health.

SITE VISITS

NANASP Executive Director Bob Blancato also made in-person visits to:

- Beverly Council on Aging, Massachusetts
- Seniors Resources of Guilford County, North Carolina
- McBride Center, Knoxville, Tennessee
- Area Agency on Aging (NACOG), Flagstaff, Arizona
- Serving Seniors, San Diego, California
- Food Bank WNY, Buffalo, New York
- Centralina Area Agency on Aging, Charlotte, North Carolina
- American Association of Retired Asians, Hanover Park, Illinois
- Brattleboro Senior Meals, Vermont

"It's easier for me instead of cooking for myself."



For more information visit www.nanasp.org or contact us at
(202) 682-6199 or info@nanasp.org



IN-PERSON SITE VISITS, YEAR 3

- Volunteers of America Colorado Branch
- Wild Rose Community Center, WI
- Duplin County Services for the Aged, NC
- Elsie Stuhr Center, Beaverton, OR
- Twin Cities Senior Center and Olympia Senior Center, WA
- St. Martin de Porres Senior Center, VA
- Whatcom Council on Aging, Bellingham, WA
- Goshen County Senior Friendship Center, Torrington, WY
- Henry County Heritage Senior Center, McDonough, GA
- North Fulton County, Roswell Senior Center, Roswell, GA



OREGON VISIT

Joined by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), who told participants about her new role as Chair of the Subcommittee reauthorizing the Older Americans Act



YEAR 3 INFOGRAPHICS

YEAR 3: BEYOND THE MEAL

CASE STUDY: The Value of Socialization in Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Programs

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a renewal grant from the Retirement Research Foundation in May 2018 to continue its study of the benefits of socialization in DAA funded Congregate Nutrition programs to the health and well-being of older adults. The information below was collected from the participants.

"Coming to MOW gives me sense of purpose."



CONGREGATE SITE
Elsie Stuhr Center
5550 SW Hall Blvd, Beaverton, OR

"My hot topic is..."



From left to right: Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) told participants of her new role as Chair of the Subcommittee which will renew the Older Americans Act, Helen, a congregate meal participant and Bob Blancato, the Executive Director of NANASP

SURVEY FINDINGS:

- 49% of respondents were female
- 89% of respondents say they visit the congregate site more often now than before they started visiting
- 63% of respondents said their health has improved since starting to visit the site
- 35% of respondents said they like to meet new friends at the congregate site

"Eat more veggies here."

YEAR 3: BEYOND THE MEAL

CASE STUDY: The Value of Socialization in Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Programs in Wisconsin

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a renewal grant from the Retirement Research Foundation in May 2018 to continue its study of the benefits of socialization in DAA funded Congregate Nutrition programs to the health and well-being of older adults. The information below was collected from the participants.

"I love the nutritious meals, activities, speakers and socialization."



5
COUNTIES PARTICIPATED
Columbia, Dane, Marquette, Ozaukee and Waushara counties



2
TRIBES PARTICIPATED
Menominee and Oneida tribes



580
COMPLETED PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

"I like talking to others."



Wild Rose Community Center
located at 500 Wisconsin St,
Wild Rose WI 54984

SURVEY FINDINGS:

- 84% of respondents said they believe the site provides a sense of purpose
- 76% say they have more friends now than before they started visiting
- 40% of respondents said what they like best about socializing is talking to friends they already know, meeting new friends and getting out of their homes each day
- 53% of respondents said their health has improved since starting to visit the site
- 71% of respondents were female
- 30% of respondents married, 40% widowed
- 57% of respondents arrive to the congregate site by car
- 23% of participants say they visit the congregate site more often now than before they started visiting
- 71% of respondents White, 15% American Indian
- Most providers at the congregate sites indicated participants are 75 years and older

"I like getting the scoop!"

YEAR 3: BEYOND THE MEAL

CASE STUDY: The Value of Socialization in Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Programs in Washington

The National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a renewal grant from the Retirement Research Foundation in May 2018 to continue its study of the benefits of socialization in DAA funded Congregate Nutrition programs to the health and well-being of older adults. The information below was collected in the Winter of 2019.

"I enjoy helping others and talking with attendees."



2 CONGREGATE SITES
Twin Cities Senior Center
2545 N. National Ave Chehalis, WA
Olympia Senior Center
322 Columbia Street NW Olympia, WA



104
COMPLETED PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

"Always looking for a date!"

SURVEY FINDINGS:



- 55% of respondents were female
- 50% of participants say they visit the congregate site a few times each week
- 91% say they have more friends now than before they started visiting the site
- 27% of respondents said what they like best about socializing is talking to friends they already know, meeting new friends and getting out of their homes each day
- 97% of respondents said they believe the site allows enough time for socialization
- 53% of respondents said their health has improved since starting to visit the site
- 34% of respondents were widowed
- 85% of respondents were white
- 81% of respondents arrive to the congregate site by car

"I try to make friends and keep them."



NANASP RESEARCH WEBSITE

NANASP
National Voice. Local Action.

Home About Us Membership Advocacy & Legislation Conferences & Events Corporate Links Resources Contact Us

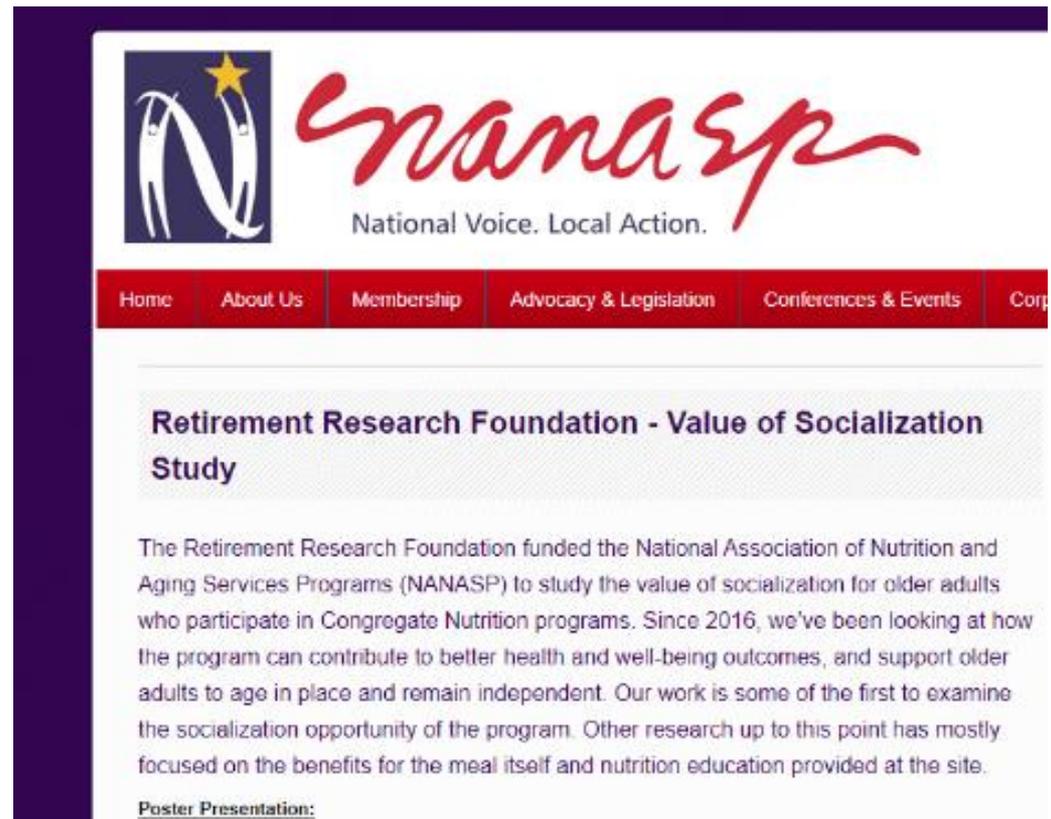
JOIN NANASP TODAY

- Elder Abuse
- Food Safety
- Malnutrition
- Older Americans Act
- RRF - Value of Socialization Study**
- Resource Publications



WEBSITE: RESEARCH DATABASE

- Webinar recordings
- Infographics
- Articles
- Survey tools
- Site visit photos



The screenshot displays the NANASP website header with the logo and tagline "National Voice. Local Action." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Membership, Advocacy & Legislation, Conferences & Events, and Corporate. The main content area features a highlighted article titled "Retirement Research Foundation - Value of Socialization Study". The article text describes a study funded by the Retirement Research Foundation, focusing on the value of socialization for older adults in Congregate Nutrition programs. It mentions that since 2016, the organization has been looking at how the program can contribute to better health and well-being outcomes, and support older adults to age in place and remain independent. The text also notes that their work is some of the first to examine the socialization opportunity of the program, while other research has mostly focused on the benefits of the meal and nutrition education.

Retirement Research Foundation - Value of Socialization Study

The Retirement Research Foundation funded the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) to study the value of socialization for older adults who participate in Congregate Nutrition programs. Since 2016, we've been looking at how the program can contribute to better health and well-being outcomes, and support older adults to age in place and remain independent. Our work is some of the first to examine the socialization opportunity of the program. Other research up to this point has mostly focused on the benefits for the meal itself and nutrition education provided at the site.

Poster Presentation:

POLL QUESTION

Does your organization offer a specific event or program designed to improve social isolation among your clients?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, please enter a brief description of your event into the Chat box on your screen. Let us know!





FUTURE-PROOFING THE CONGREGATE NUTRITION PROGRAM

UCHE AKOBUNDU AND MEREDITH WHITMIRE

March 4, 2020

A JOINT PROJECT

- In October 2018, the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP) received a year-long subgrant from the National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging (NRCNA) to focus on congregate meals programs
- The NRCNA and NANASP have worked together on products such as a literature review, a convening and proceedings, conference presentations, virtual summits, issue briefs, and a Leaders Lab group



WHY THIS WAS NEEDED

- Some local congregate meals programs are facing declines in participation, even as the older adult population continues to grow
- Programs also face different challenges, including funding and program planning issues, demographic shifts, and program perception issues
- However, opportunities are also on the rise, and this partnership sought to identify those and share them with the provider network



THE LITERATURE REVIEW

JULY 2019



CONGREGATE NUTRITION PROGRAMS

AN EXPLORATION OF CURRENT CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES



Review available at www.nutritionandaging.org/futureofcongregate

HIGHLIGHTS

- Congregate meals programs must rapidly evolve as the older adult population increases and becomes more diverse, as must all aging services programs.
- There is much opportunity to address ever-increasing needs in the areas of:
 - Demographic shifts
 - Local infrastructure
 - Hunger and food insecurity
 - Funding and planning issues
 - Cultural competency
 - Program perception



HIGHLIGHTS (CONT.)

- Offering a suite of services that leverage emerging technologies, confer tangible health and wellness benefits to the satisfaction of the local community, and address evolving needs, is an important opportunity for innovation and engagement, particularly for smaller programs



THE CONVENING



Proceedings available at www.nutritionandaging.org/futureofcongregate

VIRTUAL SUMMITS – DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Summit 1:
 - Staff training
 - Rebranding the congregate nutrition program
 - Improving dining experience
 - Business acumen
 - Addressing policy myths
- Summit 2:
 - Creating consumer focus groups
 - Engaging more staff to determine best practices and strategies
 - Technological improvements
 - Sharing the current innovative work that is already happening



ISSUE BRIEFS

Available at www.nutritionandaging.org/futureofcongregate

IMPROVING THE DINING EXPERIENCE FOR OVERALL SATISFACTION



The congregate nutrition program can be fun, engaging and impactful for older adults living in communities across the country. In fact, the three goals of the program – access to a nutritious meal, nutrition education, and an opportunity for socialization – are exactly what participants are looking for! There are several creative, simple ways to jazz up congregate meals. Together we can turn the tide to increase participation AND overall satisfaction.



The critiques/misconceptions about the congregate nutrition program are likely familiar to you

SOME OLDER ADULTS SAY

"These meals are boring"

"They're for old people"

"I wish it was a more fun and engaging experience"

"I can't come when meals are served"

"I would like to take my meals home with me"

"The meals don't meet my needs"

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE NUTRITION TRAINING

FOR CONGREGATE NUTRITION PROGRAM STAFF



Congregate nutrition programs are designed to support older adults, specifically those facing social and financial difficulties. Nutrition services like healthy meal kits typically offered at senior centers, churches and other facilities but sometimes fall short on meeting the expectations and desires of those they are set up to serve. Congregate nutrition program providers have indicated that more training is needed for staff to better understand the intricacies of the program, what's allowable, what's not, and how to create fresh meal offerings that meet the continually evolving needs and desires of current and eligible participants. From food safety to funding, congregate nutrition program staff are hungry for information.

There are several ways to strengthen staff knowledge, foster creativity and enhance resources available to best meet the needs of a community's congregate nutrition program. The strategies noted below have been cited as effective practices by rural sites across the country. Consider what may work for your organization, and how to tailor these practices to best meet your needs.



CONGREGATE NUTRITION PROGRAM MYTH BUSTERS

To ensure optimal client-centered service delivery



Participating in congregate nutrition programs for older adults can be fun, engaging and nutritionally satisfying. In fact, the core goals of the program – a nutritious meal, nutrition education, and an opportunity for socialization – are exactly what participants are looking for! There are many strategies that encourage client participation and creativity among program staff, and a multitude that are scalable to a variety of sites and meal types. Yet there may be some hesitation when seeking to adopt new practices if staff are unsure whether or not they are allowed under the rules of the Older Americans Act. This brief provides policy myths and facts when it comes to improving the dining experience for older adults. Below are just a few to consider, some of which may or may not be possible or relevant to your particular program.

MYTH Congregate nutrition programs should focus exclusively on providing a meal.

FACT While providing nutritious meals may be the central focus, there are actually several priorities – which include access to nutritious meals and socialization – within the congregate nutrition program. The opportunity for older adults to gain access to evidence-based health and wellness education in addition to vital community services are integral pieces of the program. This allows programming that not only encourages attendance but also participation. Opportunities for stimulating conversation, ways to challenge one's mind and ideas to be physically active are all encouraged. For example, some sites offer dance classes, while others may offer bridge games or health-related classes.



WHAT DO THE ISSUE BRIEFS DO?

- Discuss easy ways to support improved dining environments
- Outline ways to engage staff, clients and volunteers to have more fun
- Outline ways to engage and grow stakeholder community
- Support meals myth-busting



MAKE YOUR MARK: ENGAGE EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

- Engage funders and new partners
- Engage civic leaders and legislators
- Share with donors and potential donors
- Identify concrete ways for all to support the congregate program



MAKE YOUR MARK: SHARE INTERNALLY WITH ALL

- Share materials with your board
- Share materials with staff and volunteers
- Use issue briefs in staff onboarding
- Leverage issue briefs as pre-reads for staff meetings
- Use topics discussed in the literature review or proceedings report to inform strategic planning sessions among your leadership team



LARGER-SCALE USES

- Brainstorming sessions
 - Can be a component of a session at a community meeting or a national conference
- Focus group sessions
 - Could include older adults in your program and/or not attending your program
- Hold your own convening
 - Use the proceedings as a template or create your own!



OTHER RELEVANT NRCNA RESOURCES

- Urgency for Change: A call to action for the aging network
 - To add value and to survive thrive, senior nutrition programs need to modify and modernize. A variety of environmental changes are confronting nutrition programs.
 - <https://nutritionandaging.org/white-paper-resource-collection/>



WHAT'S NEXT?

- Upcoming presentation at 2020 ASA Aging in America Conference
- Stay tuned!



WHERE TO GO

- All materials from the project are available at www.nutritionandaging.org/futureofcongregate





**The National
Resource Center on
Nutrition & Aging**

Q & A

CELEBRATE THE SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM

- Help ACL celebrate the Older Americans Act National Senior Nutrition Program congregate services.
- By the end of March, please send photos, videos, audio clips, or testimonials from seniors about your meal site, program activities, or nutrition education to healthpromotion@acl.hhs.gov.
- Please include your contact information and permission to use the material.



KEEP ON CELEBRATING: JOIN US NEXT WEEK

For the rest of the month, the Administration for Community Living has prepared a series of weekly webinars.

Webinar #2

Title: Make Your Mark: Hospitality

Date: Wednesday March 10

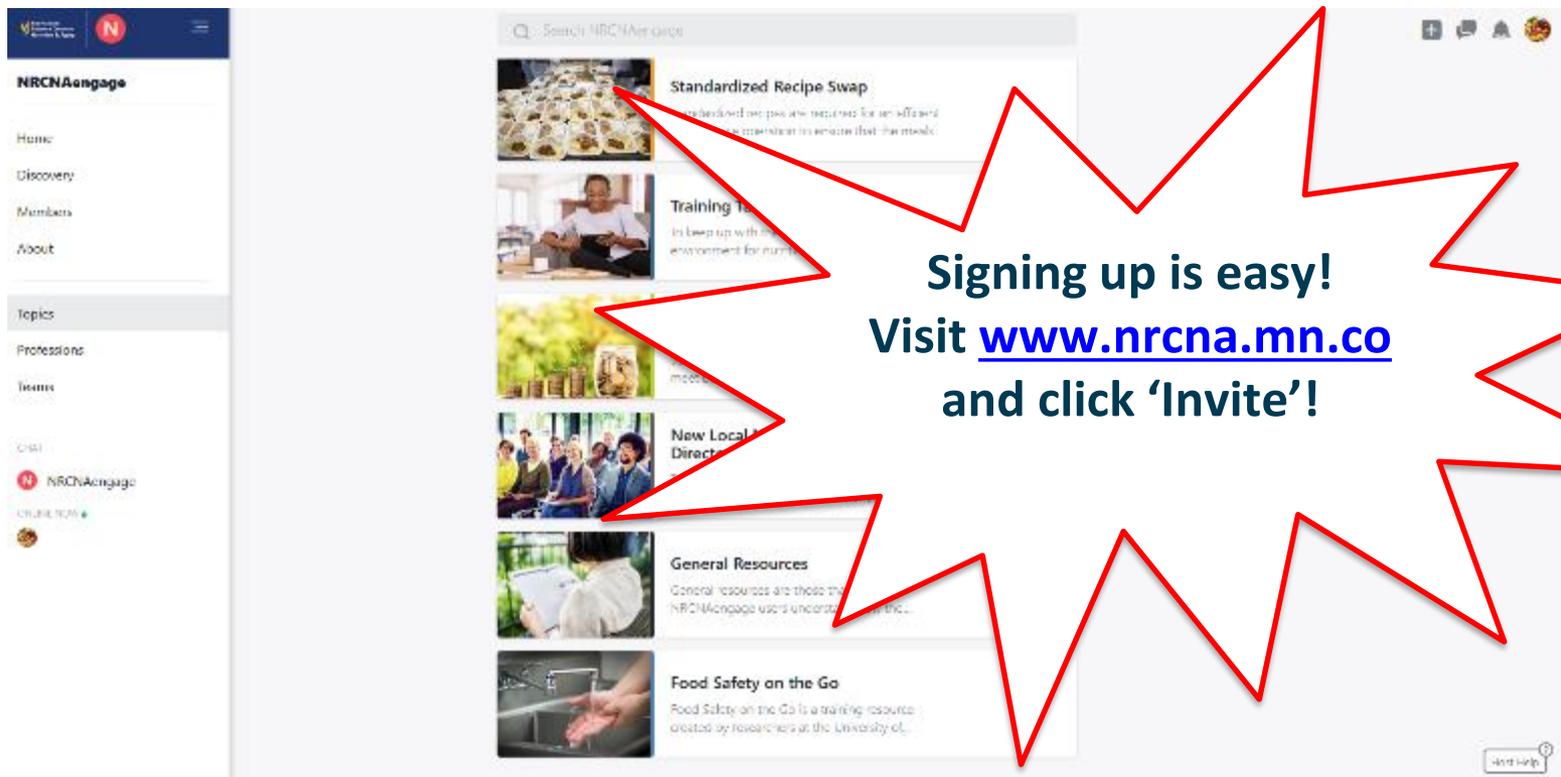
Time: 3:30pm – 5pm ET

Register: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4777418010241977613>



CONNECT WITH YOUR PEERS VIA NRCNAengage

NRCNAengage is an online venue for senior nutrition program staff, nutrition and aging professionals across the country to connect, share best practices, resources, recopies and ideas for action!



The image shows a screenshot of the NRCNAengage website. On the left is a navigation menu with links for Home, Discovery, Members, About, Topics, Professions, Issues, and a Chat section. The main content area features several article cards with images and titles: 'Standardized Recipe Swap', 'Training', 'New Local Direct', 'General Resources', and 'Food Safety on the Go'. A large red starburst graphic is overlaid on the right side of the page, containing the text: 'Signing up is easy! Visit www.nrcna.mn.co and click 'Invite!''. A search bar at the top of the main content area contains the text 'Search NRCNAengage'.



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SENIOR VIGNETTE #2

Jenny

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHOfolkcUXE>



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THANK YOU