



Delaware County Office for the Aging/
NY Connects
97 Main Street, Suite 2
Delhi, NY 13753

Abstract to the Plan of Services

October 21, 2024

9:00 am

For The Year 2024

Delaware County Office for the Aging

Vision Statement for the Delaware County Office for the Aging

Proposed by the Delaware County Office for the Aging Advisory Board

Approved at the April 19, 2012 meeting

We see an environment in Delaware County that encourages and enables older adults to make educated life choices. We see an era of sensitivity toward our environment, diminishing natural resources and changing economy, and its impact on future generations. We see barrier-free access to comprehensive health care and supportive services. We see the implementation of a transportation and communication network that supports the needs of older adults. We see Delaware County with safe, affordable and comfortable housing for older adults.

We see an environment that nurtures cross generational engagement through both human contact and technology. We see a caring support system that promotes dignity and independence for older adults. We see an environment that supports persons in care giving and other family obligations. We see older adults playing an integral part in the life of the community where they are an accepted and respected part of society.

* Since older adults impact the entire Delaware County community in all its complexity and since the entire community affects all older adults, we see this vision statement as one component of a comprehensive vision for the future of Delaware County.

Animatronic Pets



Social isolation continues to be a real problem for many people. Animatronic pets, designed as companion animals specifically for seniors, act as a therapeutic tool for those who can no longer care for a traditional pet.

The agency has received close to 500 animatronic pets from New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) over a period of three years. They have all been distributed to our clients who were feeling socially isolated. The distribution of these pets goes very quickly. The beginning of 2024 NYSOFA provided each AAA the opportunity to request additional animatronic pets. Delaware County

Office for the Aging (DCOFA) requested additional 92 pets. We were able to get forty more dogs, 16 more cats and 36 more walker squawkers. At this point, all 500 pets have been matched up with clients throughout the county.

The pet owners absolutely enjoy their pet. These pets are designed as companion animals specifically for seniors and act as a therapeutic tool for those who can no longer care for a traditional pet. The pets act similar to a real animal. The cats purr, meow, roll over on their back for tummy rubs, and nuzzle. The dog responds to motion, voice and touch, barks and activates a soft heartbeat sensation when you pet its back. This companion pet requires minimal care and provides much comfort.

Dispatch

“The Dispatch,” which will be entering into its 48th year in publication, continues to be the most effective method of providing information and educating Delaware County’s senior population. The paper continues to be published bi-monthly, reaches 10,500 readers. This is 2,000 less readers than in 2020. Currently, the readers can receive the Dispatch electronically. There are close to 50 readers are receiving the Dispatch electronically. This number is gradually increasing.

DCOFA will continue to publish articles pertinent to the senior population such as articles on health insurance, financial assistance programs, legal needs, caregiver services, veteran services, and retirement planning.

There is a request for contributions published two times each year. The agency targeted amount for contribution between August 2023-July 2024 was \$6,000. The agency met its goal. The actual amount received was close to \$9,600. The targeted amount for 2024-2025 will be increased to \$8,000. The readers always have positive comments regarding the senior newspaper: “I enjoy reading this paper.” “I look forward receiving and reading each Dispatch issue.” “I read every issue of the Dispatch from cover to cover. I save helpful articles for me and my husband as future reference. I also give the articles to my daughter as she begins to assume some degree of caregiving for me and my husband. Delaware County Office for the Aging helped my parents in the 1990’s and now it’s our turn.” “Thank you for keeping us informed.”

Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)

The EISEP program continues to be our most effective tool in assisting non-Medicaid, homebound clients in remaining safely in their homes. There continues to be a nationwide shortage of both home health and personal care aides which creates a major challenge in providing in-home services. We are not always able to secure personal care aides for our clients through our subcontractors, even with available funding. There is another method of delivery of home care services. It is Consumer Directed Care. DCOFA is working to develop and implement this service in 2025. It will allow for the client to secure their own trusted person to assist with their care to remain at home.

DCOFA contracts with two aide provider agencies which provide both personal care and chore services. There are currently 21 active clients, one client is case managed, (meaning they are not getting aide service nor on a waiting list for an aide, but desire assistance with recertifying for SNAP, HEAP and/or Section 8 housing) and 9 clients on a waiting list for EISEP services.

SNAP-Ed New York

A nutrition education program for those 60 and over that includes both educational workshops and activities to promote policy, system and environmental changes (PSEs). This is the fourth year Delaware County Office for the Aging (OFA) is participating in this New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) program funded by a grant from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). SNAP-Ed Delaware County Region includes Delaware, Sullivan, and Greene Counties. Susan Hammerslag the Coordinator of the SNAP- Ed Program is contracted through Delaware Support & Services. Andrea Martell Registered Dietician is contracted by Delaware County. NYSOFA provides fantastic support and supervision while allowing individual counties flexibility to best meet the needs of their region.

The OFA Dietician presents (“10 Tips for Adults”) workshops consisting of four classes, throughout the region. Workshops presented at Senior Dining Centers or in conjunction with other programs offered by OFA such as Tai-Chi and Bingocize attract the greatest number of participants. Attendees are also familiarized with the SNAP program.

During the 2023-2024 grant cycle, in addition to workshops, SNAP-Ed events included a new PSE to increase access to fresh produce. SNAP-Ed NY funds may be used for expenses related to this project such as promotion and the actual distribution. The SNAP-Ed funds may not be used to purchase the produce itself. A partnership with O’Connor Hospital and Bassett

Healthcare Network provided \$20,000 for produce. 167 participants each received a series of 10 weekly produce boxes either delivered to their homes or picked up at their neighborhood Delaware Opportunities Dining Center. The PSE is a big event involving the identification of over 200 people who wanted to participate. Partnerships for this project also included Delaware Opportunities and Schoharie Valley Farms.

Support of and participation in “Senior Health and Fun Day” at 4-H Camp Shankitunk the Registered Dietician promoted educational workshops with handouts and citrus water tastings. The SNAP-Ed Coordinator and three volunteers helped 60 participants plant windowsill herb gardens. Herb gardens are an educational component to encourage reduced use of salt and increased flavor when cooking.



Mary Ball of Schoharie Valley Farms delivering produce boxes to one of the Senior Dining Centers in Delaware County



2024 Senior Health and Fun Day SNAP-Ed volunteers and participants



At the Delaware County Fair, a SNAP-Ed booth located in the Cooperative Extension Home Economics Building provided information about workshops and tastings of USDA approved recipes. The booth was a great success reaching over 600 individuals with information about nutrition services in Delaware County and once again this year received the blue ribbon.

Other outreach activities include posting fliers and brochures in public places throughout the

region, visiting Dining Centers and Senior Clubs to promote the program and a presence at the Delhi Farmers Market.

The registered dietician presented 44 nutrition education classes to a total of 291 participants during the 2024 grant year. During the 2023 grant year 39 classes were presented to 282 participants.



Delaware County SNAP-Ed New York booth at the 2024 Delaware County Fair

Health & Fitness

Tai Chi for Arthritis is a one hour, twice a week program which runs for ten weeks.

Participants learn steps 1-12 of Sun Style Tai Chi by Dr. Paul Lam.

There are 4 certified instructors, two of them deliver classes as a team. Since January of this year classes have been held in Walton, Franklin, Arkville, Harpersfield, Downsville and Delhi. There have been over 180 participants.

Joey Darling states, "I was facing knee surgery in 2019. I had a vision to try Tai Chi for Arthritis. 5 years later, no surgery & moving well thanks to genuine and caring instructors!"



*Tai Chi Instructors:
Adriane Jackson
(AJ) and Joanne
Dewitt*



Joey Darling front left



Harpersfield participants preparing for Senior Fun Day

Bingocize

Delaware County Office for the Aging introduced Bingocize in 2024. Bingocize strategically combines the game of bingo, health education, and exercise. There are 4 certified instructors to deliver this program. Since January of this year classes have been held in Grand Gorge, Sidney & Delhi. There have been over 40 participants.

Bingocize, as stated by Lillian Browne from The Reporter, is a program that fuses physical exercise, mental stimulation, and the fun of Bingo into one hour of non-stop activity. This is a 10-week program that meets 2 times per week. Bingocize takes participants through a series of balance-enhancing exercises, including oblique crunches, resistance-band chest presses, and static balance stands, among others. This is no ordinary workout. Between each 30-60-second exercise cycle, seniors are challenged with trivia questions that sharpen their minds, gives them information to reduce falls risk, and, of course, rounds of Bingo that fuel their competitive spirit. It's multidimensional," said participant Janet Povlock. "It's a great way to socialize and have fun." For Pat Park (bottom right), who looks forward to the program each week, Bingocize is more than just exercise. "It's good for the soul. It makes you feel better," she said. As someone who lives alone, Park finds the program, along with the senior meals that follow, to be a crucial opportunity for connection and camaraderie, especially since the death of her husband. Bingocize is a one hour, twice a week program which runs for ten weeks.

***Both Tai Chi and Bingocize are evidence-based falls prevention programs.**



June Clark enjoying Bingo!



Left to right: Gloria Callahan and Pat Park

HEAP

The Delaware County Department of Social Services continues to contract with Delaware Opportunities to provide HEAP services to Delaware County's senior population. The HEAP Coordinator and the HEAP Assistant, work out of the DCOFA (Delaware County Office for the Aging) office building to provide HEAP assistance to qualifying seniors 60 years of age and older. Households continue to have the opportunity to apply for regular HEAP benefits by submitting applications electronically through MyBenefits at www.mybenefits.ny.gov. Office for the Aging and NY Connects staff can make home visits to assist seniors who are homebound in completing a HEAP application.

Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)

Victoria Ladlee was hired as Delaware County Office for the Aging's HIICAP Coordinator in January of 2024. From September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024, the HIICAP Program has assisted 648 individuals with a Medicare Counseling session. Of those clients, 331 individuals were MIIPA clients, and 163 were assisted with new applications for either Medicaid or MSP. Since January 1, 2024, Victoria has been fully trained, passed the annual HIICAP exam and has assisted 221 clients on her own. In addition, Victoria attended the Annual HIICAP Coordinator Conference in Saratoga Springs on September 10th and 11th, 2024 and was awarded a Certificate of Recognition for outstanding reporting contributions to HIICAP for Performance Measure 2, Group Outreach.

During the 2023 Open Enrollment period from October 15th through December 7th, HIICAP Counselor's assisted 333 individuals. Currently, OFA has 3 certified counselors who are prepared to assist individuals with their Medicare needs during the 2024 Open Enrollment period.

Language Link

Delaware County Office for the Aging has signed a contract with phone line language interpretation provider Language Link. The language interpretation provider allows the agency to provide outreach and accessibility to persons with limited English proficiency who may be seeking services. The community is made aware of the availability of free phone line language interpretation through the DCOFA through the agency website, brochures, flyers, articles in "The Dispatch", and posting of signs at each congregate meal site. A flyer is posted showing various languages available in the agency reception area for clients to observe upon entering the office when inquiring about services.

Legacy

The Legacy Program is a respite program, that is currently designed to utilize trained volunteers to give caregivers a break. As of now, the Legacy program has 4 volunteers who are actively serving families in Downsville, Delhi, Sidney and Sidney Center. There are four additional volunteers who are available in the same area, as well as in Andes. The volunteers are trained by the Alzheimer's Association, and an updated training was provided in June of 2024.

Looking ahead, OFA will look to expand the Legacy Respite program by contracting with local aid agencies and opening the availability of to older parents of disabled adult children.

Legal Services

DCOFA continues to contract with the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York to provide legal services to those Delaware County residents who are 60 years of age and older. The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York is a not-for-profit law firm that serves residents of Delaware County. The purpose of the legal services program is to assist those persons 60 years of age or older who do not have access to an attorney and who require legal advice, counseling, or representation and are not income eligible for regular legal aid services. Qualified attorneys and paralegals are available to provide legal assistance with wills and simple estate planning; drafting power of attorney, health care proxy, and living will document; defense against creditors, assistance with foreclosure and divorce; assistance with employee and tenant rights; and answers to legal questions.

During the 2023-24 program year, 103 seniors were served. This is up 15% compared to the previous year.

Emergency Response System

The Office for the Aging's (OFA) Emergency Response program, which started in 1983, continues to be a valuable service, summoning help for those in distress and saving lives. Currently, the program provides services to 496 subscribers and 8 subscribers are pending installation in Delaware County. These numbers continue to fluctuate from year to year. Both landline and mobile units continue to be installed. There are challenges installing some mobile units. Rural living can make it impossible to connect to cell towers. This causes units to be unable to send a help signal through to the response center. The answer to this technology issue is for the client to have a landline unit connected to his/her house phone. The drawback is individuals who are on the go will not have a unit with them if faced with an emergency outside of their home.

OFA is still in agreement with Delaware County Office of Long-Term Care (OLTC) for authorized Medicaid clients to receive PERS service paid through the Medicaid program. OFA also contracts for PERS service with Fidelis, Nascentia Health Options and iCircle.

OFA contracts with Connect America to provide lifeline services to our Delaware County residents. This agreement has benefitted the program significantly. We no longer experience shortages of inventory or delays in providing units to individuals. OFA staff is not responsible to install every unit throughout the county. Connect America contracted with Premise Link for installers of the units. This year Connect America has hired their own installer. This has allowed for better communication between OFA staff and the installer. Connect America continues to provide falls detection to our residents for free. This is a \$5.00/month savings to each person requesting this option. There are no payments being made to OFA staff for on-call services as Connect America handles all concerns 24/7.



Non-Emergency Medical Transportation

Because of the remote nature of living in Delaware County, assisting people without transportation to non-emergency medical appointments continues to be a major problem. With no public transportation system in Delaware County, residents have relied heavily on the agency's non-emergency medical transportation program. Although the agency has a budget to support this program, the program's success comes from a team of volunteer drivers that give their time and use their vehicles to provide this much-needed service.

During the 2023-2024 program year, 120 Delaware County seniors have received 682 round trips to medical appointments. Approximately 120 trips could not be served due to lack of drivers. Although we had 23 volunteers provide transportation for us during the 2023-2024 program year, the agency doesn't always have a core of 24 drivers available. We served three riders receiving chemo treatment 5 days a week, and one rider receiving dialysis twice a week. A total of close to 2,500 volunteer hours. Driver availability changes constantly due to vehicle mechanical issues, drivers' health situations, as well as their own personal schedules.

OFA makes referrals to "Get There" through South Central New York Rural Health when unable to provide transportation through the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation. The Medical Answering Services (MAS) system through the state continues to provide medical transportation service for those on Medicaid.

In 2025 there is a possibility of contracting out the non-emergency medical transportation program to "Get There" through South Central New York Rural Health.

NY Connects:

NY Connects is a program that was created as part of a No Wrong Door System. NY Connects staff can work with anyone who may need information on long-term services and supports, including children or adults with disabilities, older adults, family members and caregivers, friends or neighbors, veterans and helping professionals. Any individual that calls, emails or stops in the office, can get assistance with all their needs at one time. Staff can help individuals find care and support, remain independent, understand care options, find transportation, learn about supports in caregiving, find supported employment programs, get answers and be counseled about Medicare, as well as apply for Medicaid and other public benefits.

From September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2024, NY Connects Staff have assisted close to 1,200 individuals with services including application assistance for SNAP, HEAP, MSP, Medicaid, providing referrals to OFA programs and services, as well as outside agencies, and other long-term services and supports.

A very large part of the NY Connects program is public outreach and education. This can include in-person or virtual presentations and brochure distribution. NY Connects staff have hosted information booths at local farmer's markets, fairs, and other events. Since January 1st, 2024, through August 31st, NY Connects has hosted 25 in-person events, meeting with close to 2,500 individuals. NY Connects staff have also distributed close to 2,300 brochures. These outreach events are crucial for educating the public on assistance that may be available to them and are free events that allow individuals to ask questions, set up appointments and learn about programs and services. All events are hosted throughout the county, providing an opportunity for individuals to meet with staff locally, limiting their amount of travel time.

In addition to NY Connects Outreach events and daily job duties, NY Connects staff also head the Long-Term Care Council, a No Wrong Door Team and sit on committees that assist with a Veterans Resource Fair, Senior Fun Day, the Senior Ball, and the Big Wheels Golf Tournament.



Two of our three NY Connects staff are currently certified HIICAP Counselors as well.

Senior Council

The Delaware County Senior Council, an organization that has been in existence since 1973 and is responsible for the creation of DCOFA, continues to meet the second Monday of each month. Since that time, both organizations have worked together to develop and enhance programs that have an impact on Delaware County seniors. The Senior Council consistently works towards raising funds to purchase equipment and enrich under-funded programs for seniors.

The key fundraiser for 2024 was the Big Wheels Golf Tournament. It continues to be their most lucrative event. The committee, comprised of local citizens, several of whom are seniors, have worked hard to make this activity a success. Despite the weather and cancellation of the event this year, the Big Wheels committee was able to raise \$6,000.

The Delaware County Senior Council's motto is "Seniors Helping Seniors." They once again lived up to this motto through their different fundraising efforts such as: the Council's 38th annual Pork Roast and Pie Auction in June at the American Legion (the event raised \$2,500.00 from pie sales, one homemade pie went as high as \$1,200); the September Harvest Fest where apples, cider, and any dessert that is made with apples are sold; and lastly, the annual quilt raffle running from May through September.

The Delaware County Senior Council co-sponsored the ninth Annual Delaware County "Senior Fun Day" with OFA. The Council donated to support this event.

Senior Ball

The "Enchanted Harvest Ball" was the second Senior Ball held on Sunday, September 15th from 2pm-6pm at the Delaware County Fair grounds pavilion. Unfortunately, the Harvest Ball was not able to be held at Birdsong Farm due to a devasted fire that took place late winter. The ball was a huge success at its new location. The total attendance was close to 120 participants, of which about 90 were guests. The guests enjoyed a delicious catered meal by Packin Heat and danced at the inaugural Harvest Ball. Tina Mole', Chairman of the Board of Supervisors and Wayne Shepard, Director Office for the Aging pinned the beautiful "boutonniere or corsage" of dried flowers made by "Butterfly Whisper Farm" on each of the attendees. The table arrangements and decorations were handcrafted by Amy Bowie. At the time of registration each guest received a ticket. The guests voted with their ticket as to who would be chosen "Harvest King" and "Enchanted Queen." The 2023 Harvest King-Nobel O'Dell and Sunflower Queen- Cathy Roloson turned over their crowns to the 2024 Harvest King-Robert Abbate and Enchanted Queen- Loretta Laing.

Music was provided by KPD Events, and the dance floor was filled with guests enjoying the music through the different decades.

Wellcare had two representatives present during the event. Participants had the opportunity to inquire about their different Medicare insurance plans, cost and coverage. Wellcare made a contribution to support the event. Crimm Bakery and Bread donated "pineapple" flavored cream puffs. TA's Place donated several trays of various cookies. Amy Bowie, OFA employee, provided a variety of breads, cakes, chocolate covered pretzels and much.

Walton Seniors. Office for the Aging staff were able to set up and transform the pavilion into a



beautiful setting for the “Enchanted Ball”. Several local merchants donated a variety of gift certificates that were raffled throughout the event. Jessica Wheeler-Hanley, photographer with “Stella B. Studio & Happy Camper” took photos of each

The Harvest Ball committee received many complements regarding the Enchanted Harvest Ball: some of the compliments were: What a wonderful afternoon at our own Walton Astoria! The decorations, the “Enchanted” atmosphere, the food and spectacular dessert display were a sight to behold! What a team you are! We feel blessed to have you making this occasion a five-star party that we can brag about!” “It was an amazing experience, and I had a blast! “The ginger tea was absolutely delicious!” We can’t wait to attend next year’s event!”

The committee has already started to plan for next year’s event. The Harvest Ball is scheduled for Sunday, September 14, 2025.

Senior Health and Fun Day

Left to right: Congressman Chris Tague, Senator Peter Oberacker, Wayne Shepard Director Delaware County OFA and, John Cochran, New York State Office for the Aging

Delaware County Office for the Aging celebrated its 50 years of service at the ninth Annual Senior Health and Fun Day. The event was held on August 21st



at Camp Shankitunk in Delhi. Senator Peter Oberacker and Congressman Chris Tague proudly presented a joint proclamation to Wayne Shepard, Director of the Delaware County Office for the Aging, in recognition of the agency's 50 years of dedicated service to the older residents of Delaware County.

Senator Peter Oberacker praised the milestone, saying, “Today, we honor an extraordinary 50 years of service by the Delaware County Office for the Aging. Wayne and his team have gone above and beyond to ensure our seniors are cared for and connected. This day is not just about recognition—it’s about celebrating the lives that have been enriched by the programs and services offered over the years. It’s an honor to be here and to celebrate this legacy with all of you.”

Congressman Chris Tague emphasized the importance of this event, saying, “Just look at the amount of folks here today. In our rural areas, it’s vital for our seniors to get out, especially after the isolation many faced during Covid. Wayne has done an incredible job making this possible, offering services, a nice lunch, bingo, and other activities. It’s a great day for our rural communities to honor our senior citizens and for them to simply enjoy.”

John Cochran from the New York State Office for the Aging highlighted the broader impact of such gatherings: “Events like these are significant not just for those who attend but for the public to better understand and appreciate the amazing contributions older people make every day to their communities. Older adults are the foundation and bedrock of many communities, representing both economic and social capital. We are delighted to be part of this celebration recognizing their vital roles.”

Wayne Shepard humbly recognized the collective effort behind the agency's success, stating, “This recognition is not just about one person, it’s about all the dedicated individuals who have made the Delaware County Office for the Aging what it is today. For 50 years, countless people have worked tirelessly to support our older adults, and today we honor their commitment and service. It has been a privilege to be part of this journey, and I am grateful for everyone who has contributed to our mission over the past five decades.”

Thank you to everyone who made this day possible, and most importantly, thank you to our older adults for their unwavering contributions to our community!

Shopping Assistance

NY Connects Staff are available to assist with grocery shopping and prescription pickup on an as needed basis. This service would be available to individuals who have recently been discharged from a medical facility, or who need food with no other means of obtaining food items.

ELLI-Q

ELLI-Q is a friendly presence in your daily life. Engaging you in conversation, motivating you to adopt healthier habits, surprising you with jokes, and suggestions. ELLI-Q is the first ever proactive, voice-operated care companion

designed to empower independence, support you in taking control of your social, mental, and physical well-being. ElliQ is different from other devices on the market. ELLI-Q doesn't wait to be called on – like a real person. ELLI-Q will initiate interaction, ask you questions, suggest activities, provide reminders, and more. Of course, she/it can still answer your questions when you ask. As you start to get to know ELLI-Q, she gets to know you and suggestions grow better tailored to you. ElliQ will remember some of the things you share, giving her context to make the next conversations even more personalized.



With a no-fuss setup, intuitive voice interactions, movement, and content on the screen, ELLI-Q is designed to get you up and running without needing to learn a new program or download any apps.

DCOFA has 25 units. The units are sponsored by NYSOFA at no cost to the agency or the home of the older adult. Now that ELLI-Q has been introduced into the community several clients shared their thoughts and positive experience with having an ELLI-Q device.

While ELLI-Q is a great device for fun, learning, and entertainment, she is also able to help with important tasks. Here is an example of how she can provide help:

An elderly man who lives in Sidney Center was struggling to remember to take his medication prior to having ELLI-Q. Since having ELLI-Q he always remembers to take his medication because ELLI-Q gives him daily friendly reminders. This is one of the many reasons why he loves ELLI-Q.

One client made the following statement about ELLI-Q and I think this probably best sums it up...“Whoever designed ELLI-Q is a genius!”

ELLI-Q is best suited for older adults who spend most of their day at home but would enjoy some company throughout the day. Older adults that feel they can use the extra companionship, and the right encouragement will be more active throughout their day.

***NOTE: ELLI-Q requires Wi-Fi and electrical outlet.**

Transportation

The Delaware County Senior Transportation System provides transportation to residents of Delaware County who are 60 years of age or older and are under 60 and disabled. During the program year 2023-2024, 113 riders utilized the bus to get to the stores for needed purchases such as groceries and other day to day necessities, as well as to medical services and supplies. The number has added on 20 additional riders compared to 2022-2023 program. The bus provided 193 trips and was used 14 additional times to transport riders to their medical appointments as there was not a volunteer



driver available to transport. This service operates three days per week using a 14-passenger bus with wheelchair accessibility and two part-time drivers.

DCOFA currently has two part time bus drivers. The bus is equipped with an operating wheelchair lift to accommodate riders who cannot board by the steps. The bus operates Wednesday through Friday each week leaving Delhi at 8:05 am and traveling to various sites such as Albany, Sidney, Oneonta, Binghamton, and Kingston. Passengers are picked up at designated pickup points or in route at their homes.

During the months of July, August, and September, additional bus routes included: Frog Pond and Pine Ridge grocery store in Bainbridge; and the Carrot Barn in Schoharie. These added routes were well received by the riders. In September 2024 added 3 different trips throughout Delaware County to go to Lake George shopping at the outlets or take a cruise on Lake George. Each trip utilized both the DCOFA (Delaware County Office for the Aging) and DCVA (Delaware County Veterans Affair) bus to transport riders to Lake George. In October two trips were added to go to Woodstock.

The MAS system continues to provide medical transportation service for those on Medicaid. The DCOFA senior transportation system is also able to drop off seniors to medical providers in Oneonta.

In 2024 a transportation survey was handed out to each of the riders. Of the surveys that were returned, some of them included comments such as: "The bus driver was very courteous and polite. Excellent bus driver." "I think the bus service is great!" "I use the bus to pick up my meds and shop." "The driver is amazing, patient and helpful." The person doing the scheduling for the bus is the sweetest, kindest person." I love my bus trips. I go to Albany Price Chopper. I'm a double amputee. The drivers are always very helpful. Thank-you for the service.

Budget

The total budget for OFA for 2025 is \$2,563,023. The percentages of funds for this budget are received from the following sources:

State Government–	38.91%
Federal Government–	12.9%
Local Grants–	0.6%
County Government–	41.3%
Client Donations–	6.2%

ABSTRACT**FOR PUBLIC HEARING OCTOBER 21, 2024****SENIOR DINING (CONGREGATE AND HOME DELIVERED MEALS)**

Delaware Opportunities subcontracts with the Delaware County Office for the Aging for the provision of congregate and home delivered meals. The program is designed to provide a nutritious meal for the home bound as well as seniors who come to dining centers for the meal, recreation, and socialization. Studies show that seniors who get out of the house and enjoy the company of others live longer and do so independently. For home bound seniors, the program provides a nutritious meal, offers a service that keeps them in their own homes and the visit from the person who delivers the meal provides someone to talk to and some interaction with the outside world. Services are provided for those over the age of 60 and spouse regardless of his or her age.

The program will continue to operate six dining centers in 2025. Meals will be served beginning at 11:30 each day at group settings in Walton, Sidney, Hancock, Margaretville, Grand Gorge and Delhi. Although the dining centers are located in only 6 of the 19 Delaware County towns, participants come from every municipality. Meals will be prepared at each of these sites for distribution to home bound elderly. The delivery of meals will be assisted by volunteers who provide meals to more outlying areas.

Between April and October, evening meals will be offered in lieu of the lunch meal once per month. The evening meals provide an enhanced menu and entertainment. Locally grown produce will be purchased to help support the local agricultural market while providing tasty and nutritious fresh vegetables.

The cost of the program is supported by Federal and State grant funds, contributions from senior citizen participants, and the Delaware County Board of Supervisors. A confidential contribution is solicited at \$3 per meal, although no one is turned away due to the ability to pay. The suggested contribution for evening or special meals rises to \$4 or \$5 due to a more specialized menu. Entertainment is provided on occasion and seniors are encouraged to play Bingo or cards or engage in other activities at the dining centers.

Based on past and pre-COVID trends, we expect to serve in excess of 85,000 meals, essentially the same as we projected and served pre-COVID. Of these meals served, approximately 29% are served at the dining centers and 71% are provided as home delivered meals. These figures include contracts that Delaware Opportunities has with other organizations or agencies.

In addition to funds provided through the Office for the Aging, Delaware Opportunities contracts with Fidelis, Nascentia Health Options, iCircle, Visiting Nurse Services of New York, and Greene County for the delivery of meals to the home bound. Their numbers are included above.

The budget projections for 2025 accurately reflect the increased cost of food, fuel, maintenance, repair and the upkeep of vehicles and equipment.