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May is Older Americans Month

DAIL honors the resiliency and strength of older Vermonters and the Aging Services Network

May is Older Americans Month, a time each year to celebrate older adults and the network of organizations who work with them. This year's theme, "Communities of Strength," is particularly relevant as Vermont recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted older Vermonters so significantly. Most hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 over the last year were among those age 65 and over. Additionally, many older adults faced extreme social isolation, unable to connect in person with family, friends, or services in the community.

As of May 3rd, approximately 90% or 113,000 older Vermonters age 65+ have now received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The Aging Services Network, including organizations such as Home Health Agencies, Area Agencies on Aging and SASH have worked hard to ensure all older Vermonters have access to the vaccine, helping them with everything from signing up to transportation. At the same time, places like Senior Centers and Adult Day Centers are beginning to reopen for groups, once again offering older Vermonters safe and healthy spaces for gathering to enjoy social connections and wellness activities. And family can now visit loved ones more easily at long-term care facilities, like nursing homes, assisted living residences, and residential care homes.

"We are extremely appreciative of the countless organizations and individuals who have worked tirelessly to assist older Vermonters through this extraordinarily difficult time," stated Monica White, Interim Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living. "The incredible efforts made to protect older Vermonters from COVID-19 and now to support their health and well-being as we emerge from this pandemic, are a testament to Vermonters' willingness to come together when it counts. We should all be proud that Vermont truly is a 'community of strength.'"

Vermont's demographics continue to shift, with older Vermonters representing the fastest growing segment of the population, so it is important that communities across the state work to include older Vermonters, with such diverse lived experiences, in the full life of community now and into the future.

To learn more about how you can engage with Older Americans Month activities at the local level or to ask about supports and services for older Vermonters, call the Agencies on Aging Helpline at 1-800-642-5119 or visit www.vermont4a.org.

About the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL):

Our mission is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability - with dignity, respect and independence.

<http://dail.vermont.gov/>

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