



OHA's digiAGE



Loneliness & Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions

More than one-third of adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered **socially isolated**.

(National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.)

- Significantly increasing risk of premature death from all causes, a risk rivaling smoking, obesity and physical inactivity
- 50% increased risk of dementia
- 29% increased risk of heart disease and 32% increased risk of stroke
- Higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide

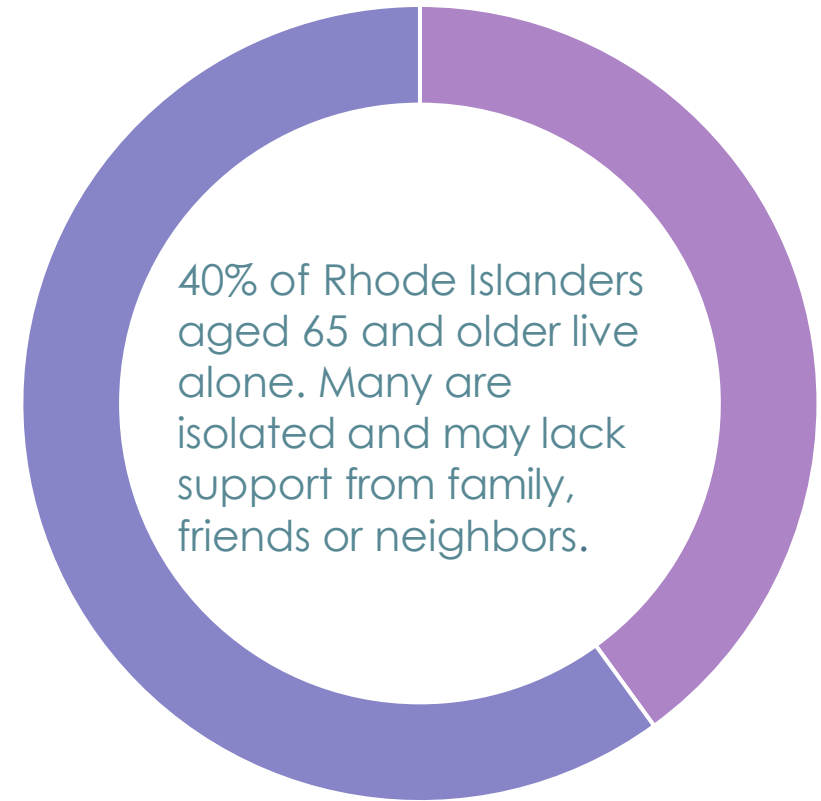
Vulnerable older adults are at highest risk, including immigrants, LGBTQ+ populations, minorities, and victims of elder abuse.

OHA Responds

People generally are social by nature, and high-quality social relationships can help them live longer, healthier lives.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing was especially important for vulnerable older adults due to the high risk of severe illness resulting from COVID-19 infection. However, this increased social isolation added to family caregiver burden, reduced access to healthcare services, strained support networks, and hampered coping strategies.

In April 2020, OHA launched Project HELLO, a volunteer effort to connect older adults in need of socialization and connection due to the pandemic. This “telebuddy” program connected isolated Rhode Island older adults to peers in their communities.



digiAGE Collaborative

Today we live in a digital world: from how we shop, work and bank to how we socialize. It's all one click away, if you're "connected." At least one quarter of older Rhode Islanders aren't, so OHA started the digiAGE collaborative.

Objective: Bridging the digital divide for older adults through coordinated investments in smart devices, training, online content and internet connectivity.



Devices: Increasing the availability of user-centric technology among those in-need.



Training: Building user-friendly curriculum and platforms that increase digital literacy.



Content: Creating compelling online programs that promotes connection and opportunity.



Connectivity: Expanding internet access for older people and their family caregivers.

Partner Spotlight: University of RI Engaging Generations Cyber-Seniors Program




Created to bridge the digital divide by teaching older adults how to use technology, URI Cyber-Seniors student participants mentor older adults to effectively use devices like smartphones, tablets and laptops.


January 2021 to January 2024


- ➔ 451 iPads delivered
- ➔ 157 hotspots delivered
- ➔ 64 Spanish-speaking participants
- ➔ 150 minoritized participants

Community Partner Locations

Central Falls, Charlestown, East Greenwich, Jamestown, Narragansett, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, South Kingstown, Warwick, West Warwick, Woonsocket

 One-on-one and group sessions with URI student mentors, conducted via phone, virtual or in-person

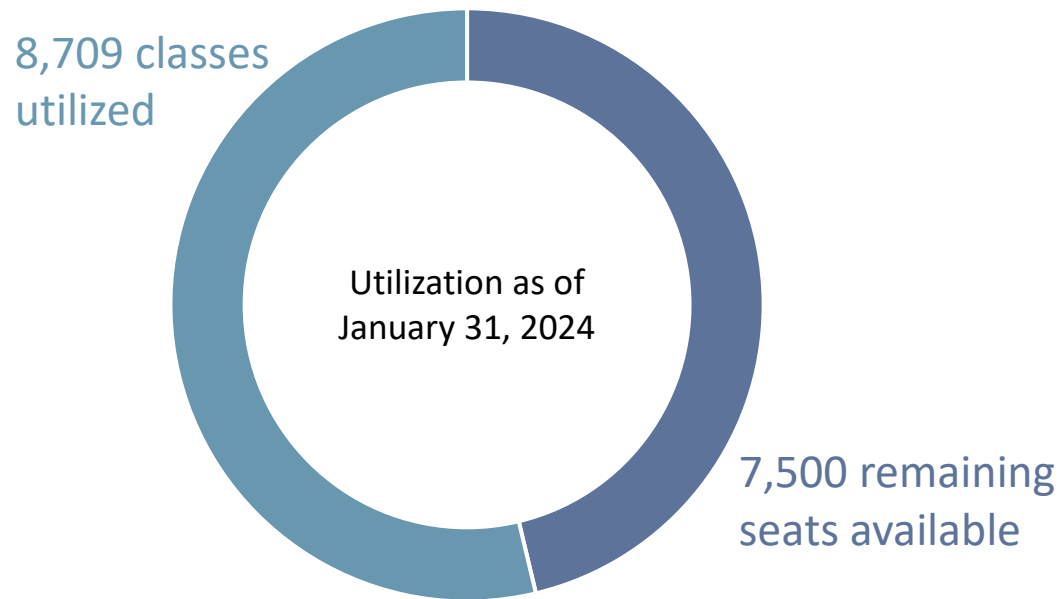
 Zoom meetings to educate older adults on Rhode Island-specific programs and health-related resources

 Students assigned to community sites where they are matched with an older adult, bridging generational gap

Partner Spotlight: GetSetUp x OHA

In November of 2022, OHA launched a partnership with GetSetUp, an online learning platform for older adults to help bridge the digital divide and combat social isolation.

- Learners can choose from a catalog of over 4,000 classes that shift weekly and are available around the clock. Classes promote digital literacy, socialization, health and wellness, and new learning experiences.
- Classes are taught in English, Spanish, Hindi, and Mandarin.



Rhode Islanders 55+ can access GetSetUp **FREE** through the special link which lives on the OHA homepage:

www.getsetup.io/partner/ri

Other digiAGE Projects

The Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL) provides older adults living with disabilities, who transition from a nursing facility to home or a community living setting, including participants in Rhode Island's Nursing Home Transition Program (NHTP) with digital devices, internet services, and training on use of devices to access information and resources online.

- 32 clients referred to program
- 25 clients received training and device

The RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) provides older adults, who transition from the hospital to the community including those in participating in the Hospital Care Transitions Initiative (HCTI) with digital devices, internet services, and training on use of devices to access information and resources online.

- 38 clients referred to program
- 13 clients received training and device

Closing & Questions
