



DYNAMIC AGING

The Social Connection

What are the key predictors of health as we age? Certainly exercise and good nutrition play a vital role in healthy aging, but did you know that active ties with friends, family, and community have also been shown to increase health and life span?

A 2005 American Psychological Society research study, "How Can I Connect With Thee?" revealed that regular contact with friends and relatives predicted lower levels of the feeling of isolation in the non married. It goes on to suggest that "people have the capacity, and perhaps the need, to experience a deep sense of interpersonal connectedness in dyadic relationships." Other research demonstrates that having a supportive network of friends can buffer the adverse effects of stress and may even reduce the risks of illness, and speed recovery when illness does occur.

A wonderful way to stay connected is to participate in one or more of the senior meals provided in our region. Not only do you get a delicious, nutritious meal, but there is an opportunity to make new connections as we]] as nourish existing ones. Information below is current as of this writing; however, it's a good idea to call and confirm if you are planning to attend for the first time. Need a ride? Contact the Senior Transportation Program at 647-2483.

- Naples Senior Cafe, last Friday of each month, 10:30 - 1 pm, American Legion on Route 11, \$4 donation, reservations required, call Cheryl Cronin at 693-4377.
- Naples/Casco Senior Meal, Mondays and Thursdays, 12 noon, Casco Fire Station, \$4 donation, call Beth Latsey at 627-4187.
- Bridgton Community Center Senior Meal, every Wednesday, 12 1 pm, \$2, call Lorraine Goldrup, at 647-3116.
- Sebago Senior Meal, each Tuesday, 12 noon, Sebago Town Hall, Route 107, call Town Hall at 693-2457.
- St. Peter's Cafe, every third Monday, 11 am - 1 pm, free, Bridgton United Methodist Church building, Main Street in Bridgton, call Janet Jones at 647-8549.
- Casco Alliance Church Community Supper, first Monday of each month, 4:30 - 6:30 pm, free to all ages, 450 Roosevelt Trail, call Pamela Graffius at 655-4054.

An excerpt from the article "Foundation of Successful Retirement" located on the Mature Resources website, sums it up nicely: Greater benefits can occur from membership in a supportive community, a group of people who depend on one another from day to day. Community connection often means going regularly to a place where the "regulars" greet you by name, acknowledge you without prompting, and miss you if you don't show up, like a coffee house, church, gymnasium or community center. The TV program, Cheers, depicts such a place, "...where everyone knows your name" and some of your story. Recent research confirmed that belonging to a close-knit community, like a religious group or volunteer organization, correlated with better health among elders.