

This is Maggie Kraft of the Area 1 Agency on Aging with a Community comment on KINS.

May is Older Americans Month and communities across the country are showing their gratitude to older adults. The theme of this year's celebration is "Get into the Act," to focus on how older adults are taking charge of their health, engaging in their communities, and making a positive impact in the lives of others.

This year is also the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Act into law in July 1965. Since that time, the Act has provided a nationwide aging services network and funding that helps older adults live with dignity in the communities of their choice for as long as possible. These services include home-delivered and congregate meals, caregiver support, community-based assistance, preventive health services, elder abuse prevention, legal services, and much more. By promoting and engaging in activity, wellness, and inclusivity, more Americans than ever before can "Get into the Act."

While the Area 1 Agency on Aging provides a number of services to older adults year-round, Older Americans Month offers us a special opportunity to emphasize how older adults can access the home- and community-based services needed to live independently. It is also an occasion to highlight how older adults are making a difference in our communities. A1AA's "Being Here Now" art show at our offices at 434 7th Street in Eureka is a positive example of older adult creativity. The show goes through June 26.

This 50 year anniversary is a good time to recognize that the Older Americans Act is in danger of becoming an outdated albatross unable to meet the immense needs of a rapidly growing population of older adults. Unless Congress reauthorizes and modernizes the Act to meet the growing and changing needs of seniors in the 21st Century, local services designed to promote independence will shrink and eventually disappear. It's time not only to get into the act, but to get our act together.

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