

Support Needed for The Gathering Place: A Community Center for Aging Well



Cobleskill, NY – The Gathering Place 50 Plus Community Center is celebrating three years of providing a safe and welcoming space for the older residents of our community to thrive. Since its opening in June 2021, this center has become a crucial resource, offering more than 2,600 members opportunities to stay active, engaged, and connected with others. It is a place where community members can continue to lead fulfilling lives as they age, but this vital service is facing financial challenges.

The need for a space like The Gathering Place was undeniable. Before it opened, there were no local or nearby options for older adults to socialize, stay active, and feel part of a caring community. This is particularly significant given that nearly 42% of Schoharie County's population is aged 55 and older; a need that had gone unaddressed for too long. Thanks to the vision of the Schoharie County Council of Senior Citizens, Inc. and its Executive Director, Kim Witkowski, the center was established to fill this gap.

A Growing Community with Expanding Needs

The Gathering Place offers over 20 fitness classes weekly, including Pilates, Tai Chi, Zumba Gold, and more. Beyond fitness, members can explore art, crafts, music, lifelong learning, and social activities like book clubs and game nights, as well as taking part in the many bus trips offered. These programs help our community members remain active and independent while forging new friendships and connections. The center has even expanded beyond Cobleskill, opening a second location in Oneonta in September 2023.

Despite its success and the positive impact it has had, The Gathering Place operates without any federal, state, or county funding. "Funding remains our greatest challenge," says Witkowski. "We've applied for over 70 grants this year, but our support still relies heavily on the generosity of individual donors, local businesses, and proceeds from our Everything Shoppe thrift stores."

Why Your Support Matters

The Gathering Place isn't just a community center; it's a lifeline for many of our older neighbors. It is a space where members can find new purpose, build meaningful relationships, and stay active and engaged. As one member put it, "This place has become my home away from home." With rising operating costs and increased demand for services, the center needs continued financial support to maintain and expand its offerings. The community's support is crucial to ensure that the Gathering Place can continue to serve our aging population. Every donation helps provide new programs, expand outreach efforts, and maintain the welcoming environment that so many have come to cherish. Memberships are just \$35 a year and make a meaningful gift for loved ones. Additionally, individuals can contribute directly to a member's account to help them participate in various activities.

Help Us Continue to Make a Difference

If you would like to support The Gathering Place, or simply learn more, stop by for a visit at 127 Kenyon Road, Cobleskill, NY, or reach out to us at 518-823-4338. You can also visit our website at www.gatheringplace50plus.org. Together, we can ensure that aging doesn't mean growing old alone, but rather, being part of a vibrant and supportive community.