



# UpBEAT

Be Educated and Active Together  
For those 55 years and older

OhioHealth.com/UpBEAT

March/April 2026

## Food for Thought

Master Gardener Shares How to Grow Your Garden with *Karen Durniat-Suehrstedt*

**THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 1-2 PM, ATHENS PUBLIC LIBRARY, 30 HOMES ST, LARGE GATHERING RM**

*NOTE: This is not a library-sponsored event*



Join Karen Durniat-Suehrstedt, Athens County Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV), who will speak on home gardening. After retiring from nursing, she became an MGV for Athens County. She plants a variety of flowers and vegetables in her gardens every year and is looking forward to conversing about gardening at her favorite time of the year – spring. Her presentation will cover topics such as selecting the site for your garden, soil amendements and plant selection. Bring your gardening questions and we will all learn together. Let's get growing!

## A Message from Mary Jane

+ It may be spring, but inclement weather can linger.

**REMINDER**, if Athens city and county schools are closed, the UpBEAT activities are canceled.

- + Cherry blossoms in Athens! Join our walk on March 31 to enjoy the blooms! Info on page 2.
- + Want to plant a garden, but don't think you have a green thumb? Join us on April 16 to learn more.
- + **Seventh inning stretch!** You don't want to miss this incredible presentation by sports historian Lee Elder on April 9. See page 2.
- + **Super exciting news!** Mike Kellogg is heading up an UpBEAT singing and music program. Please join us on Mondays, beginning March 2. Info on page 2.



*(L) No foolin'! It's Mary Jane with OU intern Brett, wishing you a Happy April Fools' Day!*



*(R) Eesha and the UpBEAT members are ready for spring and cherry blossoms!*

## History Group

Historical and Modern Environmental Impacts in the Lake Hope State Park Region with *Kaylin Callander*

**TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 1-2 PM, THE PLAINS PUBLIC LIBRARY, 14 S PLAINS RD**



*NOTE: This is not a library-sponsored event*

Join Lake Hope State Park naturalist Kaylin Callander on a journey of historical cultural impacts by exploring the rich geology in the park, surrounding state forest and beyond. Then fast forward to current day as she shares conservation efforts that strengthen the biodiversity of the area and capitalize on the park's unique location.



# Additional Presentations:

## + Cherry Blossom Stroll

**TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1-2 PM, MEET AT THE WILLOWVIEW CAFÉ AT O'BLENESS HOSPITAL**

*Inclement weather: the event will be rescheduled to April 7.*

Join Eesha and the UpBEAT members to enjoy the beautiful cherry blossom trees blooming along the Hocking River. We will walk leisurely on the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway. Extra special for you, Eesha will capture Polaroid photos that you can take home and will have prepared flower-themed snacks.



Joe Timmons

## + The Story of the Great Walter Alston: from Butler County to the Los Angeles Dodgers

**THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 1-2 PM, O'BLENESS HOSPITAL, LOWER LEVEL, CONFERENCE ROOM 10**

**The Quiet Manin:** Please join sports historian Lee Elder as he takes us back in time to relive the story of baseball's



Walter Alston. Walter grew up in Darrtown, a small town in Butler County, and eventually went on to manage the Dodgers. Alston's teams won seven National League pennants and four World Series championships in his 23 years with the club. Although Alston lived much of his professional life in Brooklyn, New York and Los Angeles, California, he always spent the off season in Darrtown, Ohio. And, why did Walter Alston have a telephone in every room of his house? Attend on April 9 and find out!

## + UpBEAT Singing and Music Program



**MONDAYS AT 12:30 PM, THE ATHENS COMMUNITY CENTER, MULTIPURPOSE ROOM C, 701 E STATE ST**

The launch to revive an enjoyable experience begins on Monday, March 2. Please join



UpBEAT member Mike Kellogg, who has volunteered to organize this program – thank you, Mike! With his special music background, Mike welcomes all of you to join in singing your personal, old familiar favorite tunes. Song lyrics are provided with piano accompaniment. Join in and listen to the sounds of spring. All are welcome! Contact Mary Jane with questions.



# BEAT Board

## From our Members

+ How would you like to be a part of our History Group, helping to organize topics and outings? We know there are many history buffs out there; don't be shy! Contact Mary Jane to learn more.



*UpBEAT members were all on Santa's good list in 2025!*



*UpBEAT members are ready for spring 2026!*



## CONTACT MARY JANE

**OhioHealth.com/UpBEAT** | membership is free. Contact Mary Jane Timmons, program manager, at **MaryJane.Timmons@OhioHealth.com** or **(740) 566-4680** to join UpBEAT and receive the monthly newsletter.

*Photos and/or videos may be taken during UpBEAT activities. If you do not wish to be photographed, please contact Mary Jane.*

# Nutrition As We Age

## Cholesterol Levels and Aging: What Does It Mean for Your Health?



*Provided by Ohio University Graduate of Exercise Physiology, Brett Sharpe*

**Cholesterol often gets a bad reputation, but it plays a key role in keeping the body healthy.** This waxy, fat-like substance is found in every cell, helping to make hormones, vitamin D and bile acids that aid digestion. Our bodies naturally produce the cholesterol needed for daily function, but diet and lifestyle choices can push levels too high, increasing health risks.

**As we age, cholesterol management becomes especially important.** Arteries naturally stiffen over time, making it easier for plaque to build up when cholesterol levels rise. High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death among older adults.

**Understanding cholesterol is a great first step to preventing and managing high levels.** There are two main types of cholesterol: LDL (low-density lipoprotein) and HDL (high-density lipoprotein). While both are essential to the body, LDL is often considered “bad,” as it carries cholesterol into arteries, causing plaque build-up and narrowing blood vessels. HDL is considered “good” because it removes cholesterol from blood vessels and sends it to the liver for elimination.

### Consider these tips to maintain healthy cholesterol levels year-round:

- + **Choose healthy fats:** Replace butter with olive or avocado oil when cooking. These oils contain unsaturated fats that boost HDL levels.
- + **Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids:** These are found in salmon, tuna and walnuts. Omega-3 foods boost heart health and HDL levels.
- + **Limit saturated and trans fats:** Reduce intake of fried foods, processed snacks and high-fat meats to help reduce LDL levels. Look for “0 g trans fat” and less than 2 g saturated fat per serving on food labels.
- + **Increase fiber intake:** Aim for 25-30 grams of fiber daily, including soluble fiber from oats, beans, fruits and vegetables. Fiber helps reduce LDL by trapping it in the digestive tract.
- + **Stay active:** Daily physical activity will lower LDL levels and raise HDL levels.

# Health and Wellness

**National Plant a Flower Day is on March 12!** This day encourages us to welcome the spring season by gardening. Gardening



is an enjoyable way for people of all ages and abilities to support their local ecosystem and their physical and mental health. For older adults, gardening can be a great source of gentle, well-rounded exercise, engaging balance, coordination, flexibility, and both fine and gross motor skills. It has also been shown to relieve stress and improve mood by fostering a connection with nature.

Anyone can enjoy gardening in its many forms. By growing plants in pots and containers or vertically on walls and trellises, you can garden in limited spaces with less need for excessive bending. Ergonomic tools with padded handles make gardening even easier on the joints. You may also consider joining one of Athens’ four community gardens, where like-minded residents collaborate to grow plants.

To learn more about planting your garden, join us for a presentation on April 16!

## Exercise **EXERCISE TIP:** Walk in nature this spring!



Many older adults are familiar with walking as a form of exercise. However, did you know that walking in nature offers further benefits for the body and mind? Here are a few advantages of outdoor walking to explore:

- + **Helps maintain strength and balance:** Walking on natural terrain strengthens the muscle groups needed to maintain balance. This can help reduce the risk of falls.
- + **Boosts vitamin D:** Sunlight stimulates vitamin D production, which supports bone and immune health.
- + **Reduces risk for heart disease:** The combined effect of a calming green environment and cardio exercise helps lower blood pressure and promote heart health.
- + **Improves sleep quality:** Nature offers peaceful surroundings that help reduce stress. This can lead to better sleep.
- + **Fights mental fatigue:** Studies suggest that spending time in nature can improve attention span, memory and problem-solving skills.

O'Bleness Hospital  
55 Hospital Dr  
Athens, OH 45701

## Spotlight

### Cherry Blossoms – History and Their Home in Athens

#### Cherry Blossoms, a Global Icon

Cherry blossoms are iconic symbols of renewal and hope, celebrated worldwide for their delicate beauty. Pink flowers are often said to represent femininity, happiness and positivity.

#### History of the Cherry Blossoms

Cherry blossom (sakura) history began in ancient Japan, evolving from divine harvests to a symbol of life's fleeting beauty (wabi-sabi), adopted by aristocrats and samurai as emblems of transience and honor. Celebrated through centuries of flower-viewing parties (hanami), they became an international symbol of friendship after Japan gifted thousands of trees to the United States in 1912, leading to the famous Washington D.C. festival.

#### Cherry Blossoms in Athens

In 1979, Chubu University in Japan gifted Ohio University several cherry blossoms in honor of its 175th anniversary. Now each year, these beautiful trees bloom along the Hocking River, signaling the beginning of spring. **Join us on March 31 for an Athens adventure; info on page 2.**



| SUNDAY | MONDAY  | TUESDAY   | WEDNESDAY   | THURSDAY   | FRIDAY   | SATURDAY |
|--------|---|---|---|--|--|----------|
| 1      | 2<br>12:30 PM<br>UpBEAT <br>SINGING/MUSIC    | 3<br>10 AM<br>Exercise Class  | 4   | 5<br>10 AM<br>Chair Volleyball<br><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi       | 6  | 7        |
| 8      | 9<br>12:30 PM<br>UpBEAT <br>SINGING/MUSIC    | 10<br>10 AM<br>Exercise Class<br><br>1 PM HISTORY<br>GROUP Lake<br>Hope                   | 11  | 12<br>11:30 AM Tai Chi<br><br>National Plant a<br>Flower Day | 13   | 14       |
| 15     | 16<br>12:30 PM<br>UpBEAT <br>SINGING/MUSIC | 17<br>10 AM<br>Exercise Class<br><br>Happy St.<br>Patricks Day!                           | 18  | 19<br>10 AM<br>Chair Volleyball<br><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi      | 20<br>First Day of<br>Spring!  | 21       |
| 22     | 23<br>12:30 PM<br>UpBEAT <br>SINGING/MUSIC | 24<br>10 AM<br>Exercise Class   | 25  | 26<br>11:30 AM Tai Chi                                       | 27   | 28       |
| 29     | 30<br>12:30 PM<br>UpBEAT <br>SINGING/MUSIC | 31<br>10 AM<br>Exercise Class<br><br>1 PM CHERRY<br>BLOSSOM WALK<br>AND SPECIAL<br>TREATS | <b>Ambassador Members</b><br>Rick Bongiorno, JoEllen Bongiorno,<br>Steve Chikosky, Martha Johnson, Gwen<br>Kellogg, Rhonda Koch, Larry Mages, Drew<br>McDaniel, Chalisa McDaniel, Sue Ellen<br>Miller, Lynne Peterson, Marcia Ruhling,<br>Fran Snyder and Roberta Watkins |  | For questions, please contact<br>Mary Jane Timmons at<br>(740) 566-4680. |          |

**Exercise Class:** at Athens Community Center, multipurpose room B, 701 E State St

**Tai Chi:** at the Athens Community Center, Exercise Studio, 701 E State St

**Singing and Music Program:** at the Athens Community Center, multipurpose room C, 701 E State St

**Chair Volleyball:** at the Market on State St, 1002 E State St, Athens, contact [Eesha.Vijayakumar@OhioHealth.com](mailto:Eesha.Vijayakumar@OhioHealth.com)

*All programs are in-person only.  
Programs are subject to change.*

| SUNDAY   | MONDAY   | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY                            | THURSDAY   | FRIDAY    | SATURDAY  |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Ambassador Members</b><br>Rick Bongiorno, JoEllen Bongiorno, Steve Chikosky, Martha Johnson, Gwen Kellogg, Rhonda Koch, Larry Mages, Drew McDaniel, Chalisa McDaniel, Sue Ellen Miller, Lynne Peterson, Marcia Ruhling, Fran Snyder and Roberta Watkins |  | For questions, please contact Mary Jane Timmons at (740) 566-4680. | <b>1</b><br><i>April Fools' Day!</i> | <b>2</b><br>10 AM Chair Volleyball<br><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi   | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>5</b><br><br><i>Happy Easter!</i>   | <b>6</b><br>12:30 PM UpBEAT SINGING/MUSIC     | <b>7</b><br>10 AM Exercise Class                                   | <b>8</b>                             | <b>9</b><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi<br><br>1 PM HISTORY GROUP with Lee Elder                                    | <b>10</b> | <b>11</b> |
| <b>12</b>  | <b>13</b><br>12:30 PM UpBEAT SINGING/MUSIC   | <b>14</b><br>10 AM Exercise Class                                  | <b>15</b>                            | <b>16</b><br>10 AM Chair Volleyball<br><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi<br><br>1 PM FOOD FOR THOUGHT Master Gardener | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b> |
| <b>19</b>  | <b>20</b><br>12:30 PM UpBEAT SINGING/MUSIC  | <b>21</b><br>10 AM Exercise Class                                  | <b>22</b>                            | <b>23</b><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi  | <b>24</b> | <b>25</b> |
| <b>26</b>  | <b>27</b><br>12:30 PM UpBEAT SINGING/MUSIC  | <b>28</b><br>10 AM Exercise Class                                  | <b>29</b>                            | <b>30</b><br>11:30 AM Tai Chi  |           |           |

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