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U.N. International Day of Older Persons

*By Edwin Walker, Acting Assistant Secretary for Aging and Acting Administrator,
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On Saturday, we will join communities around the world in observing the International Day of Older Persons. October 1 was designated by the United Nations in 1990 to recognize the vital contributions of older people to the global community and to encourage member nations to thoughtfully address the aging of the population. At the Administration for Community Living, we are working to ensure that this includes the supports and services necessary for older people to live and contribute in their communities.

This year, the United Nations has designated the 2016 International Day of Older Persons theme as, “[take a stand against ageism](#)” in order to draw attention to and challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and aging. Ageism is the systemic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are considered old.

The international community has officially recognized the harmful consequences of ageism as a matter of human rights. In 2014, governments around the world adopted a resolution (E/RES/2014/7) at the United Nations Economic and Social Council that recognized ageism as “the common source of, the justification for and the driving force behind age discrimination.”

In the United States and around the world, too often we see limited and stereotyped depictions of older people and of aging. Many of these messages center on the notion that seniors are burdens to their families, and that aging places economic strains on countries.

While it is true that many older adults experience poor health as they age, it also is true that many enjoy good health far longer than people once could expect. Combined with extended longevity, this means that older people are increasingly found in the workforce, playing key roles in their communities, and providing care and support to family members. Many need some help with the tasks of life as they get older, but in many cases, older adults are providing this help to others in their families and communities. Let’s work together to make sure these stories are told, and that older adults’ contributions do not continue to be overlooked. To read more, go to, http://www.acl.gov/NewsRoom/blog/2016/2016_09_29.aspx.

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