



HealthCoach

Timely, trusted advice from Outer Banks Health



The Vital Role of Belonging in Well-Being

The idea that social connection impacts longevity might seem abstract, but research from the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) shows it's a powerful reality. Human beings are inherently social, and the bonds we form influence not only our emotional well-being but also our physical health.

Whether through close friendships, an organization, family ties, or shared activities, being a part of a community can reduce stress, boost resilience, and even lower the risk of chronic diseases. "Belonging connects us to a shared purpose and gives our lives depth; it's a crucial part of our health," said Marielle Silk, FNP-BC, DipACLM, from the Center for Healthy Living. The release of oxytocin, often called the "bonding hormone," is one biological mechanism behind this effect. This feeling calms the nervous system, reduces inflammation, and supports cardiovascular health, all of which are essential for preventing conditions like hypertension and diabetes.

When you feel like you truly belong, you can take off the emotional armor and just be who you are.

—Marielle Silk, FNP-BC, DipACLM,
Center for Healthy Living

True belonging thrives on authenticity. It's about bringing your true self to the table and feeling empowered to share your unique identity with others. When you feel comfortable and supported in being yourself, the connections you build become deeper and more meaningful. Silk said, "When you feel like you truly belong, you can take off

the emotional armor and just be who you are." Authenticity paves the way for genuine belonging by creating an environment of acceptance, shared values, and stability within relationships, which promotes healthier choices and holistic health.

Simultaneously, having a strong social circle, or being in the right environment, can act as a buffer against mental health challenges. Feeling connected with your group strengthens emotional security, resilience, and mental clarity. According to the ACLM, individuals who

cultivate meaningful relationships are better equipped to make healthy choices and positively cope with anything life presents. Along with this accepting and safe feeling, belonging to your right tribe adds a protective layer that enhances quality of life.

In the world's Blue Zones™—regions where people frequently live and thrive past 100—belonging is a common denominator. Community meals, shared traditions, group activities, strong cultural identity, and intergenerational relationships provide a deep sense of purpose and belonging. Despite being scattered across the globe, these well-studied, healthy centenarians share a life-defining trait: a strong sense of belonging.

Belonging is a powerful, influential factor in longevity. By embracing your authentic self and finding acceptance in the right environment and social circle, you create a path toward longevity and a fruitful life.

Social Well-Being and Nutrition

It's been long understood that what you eat influences how you feel on a daily basis. Eating a diverse, nutrient-dense diet—and "Eating the Rainbow," as the Center for Healthy Living demonstrates—leads to boosted energy, mental clarity, enhanced immune function, and increased happiness. Basically, you feel good! A healthy diet is a gateway to elevating your social well-being and unlocking your authentic self. Ultimately, your plate doesn't just fill you up, it also satisfies your social well-being—fueling a healthier, happier you!



March/April 2025

Education, Support, and Community Events

The Blood Connection Blood Drives

The Blood Connection will be hosting community blood drives on the Outer Banks. All donors are asked to make an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are highly recommended and take priority. To make an appointment, use the QR codes or visit thebloodconnection.org. All donors will receive an e-gift card. *Outer Banks Health team members, please present your badge upon arrival.*

Friday, March 7 | 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Outer Banks Health | 4800 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

Saturday, April 12 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Outer Banks Family YMCA | 3000 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head



March 7



April 12

Stroke Support Network

Outer Banks Health offers a free Stroke Support Network on the first Tuesday of every month for stroke survivors and their caregivers. For more details and to register, contact Robin South, RN, at 252-449-4554 or by email at robin.south@outerbankshealth.org. Attend in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Tuesdays: March 4 & April 1 | 11 a.m. - noon

OBH Port Room or via Teams | 4810 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

FIT Colon Cancer Screening and Medicine Drop

Outer Banks Health will be offering free colon cancer screenings. During this event, individuals aged 50-75 will be offered a fecal immunochemical test (FIT) kit used to screen for colon cancer from the comfort of home. Kits can be picked up, but individuals must attend the Monday event to receive individual results. All screenings will take place on the Outer Banks Health Coach vehicle located in the parking lot. In partnership with the Saving Lives Task Force and Dare County Health and Human Services, unused and unwanted prescription, over the counter, and animal medications will be collected by the Dare County Sheriff's Office for proper disposal. For more information, call 252-449-4529.

FIT Pickup: Friday, April 4 | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

FIT Drop-off: Monday, April 7 | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Kill Devil Hills Library | 400 Mustian St, Kill Devil Hills



The Outer Banks Health Better Breathers Club

Individuals with chronic lung disease and their caregivers are invited to join the American Lung Association Better Breathers Club. Learn better ways to cope with conditions such as COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, and asthma while getting the support of others in similar situations. Meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of every month. To register, scan the QR code.

Wednesday, March 12 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

OBH Seahorse Room | 4810 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

Wednesday, April 9 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

OBH Anchor Room | 4800 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head



March 12



April 9

Advance Care Planning

Do you know who would get to make medical decisions for you if you have not completed a healthcare power of attorney and advance directive? Join us for a free, informative session about advance care planning. If you require only witness/notary assistance, please arrive ten minutes before the close of the session. Questions? Call 252-475-0905.

Wednesday, March 5 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Virginia Tillett Center | 950 Marshall C Collins Dr, Manteo

Wednesday, March 5 | noon - 1 p.m.

Baum Senior Center | 300 Mustian St, Kill Devil Hills

Tuesday, April 8 | 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Baum Senior Center | 300 Mustian St, Kill Devil Hills

Experience a Blue Zone Raffle

Win a seven-night resort stay in the Italian Blue Zone, Sardinia

The winner of the Experience a Blue Zone Raffle will enjoy a vacation package to Sardinia, Italy, valued at \$8,000. Package includes a seven-night resort stay for two (2) people, one (1) Italian "experience" excursion, round-trip economy airfare and airport transfers. Scan the QR code or go to www.outerbankshealth.org/gala2025 for all information.



\$100
PER TICKET



Raffle ticket does not grant entry to gala. Winner does not need to be present at the gala.

Wellness and A1C Screenings

Outer Banks Health offers free wellness screenings, which include blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, blood sugar, and body mass index, as well as health coaching. A1C screenings, which measure a person's blood glucose level over the past three months, will also be available.

Appointments are highly recommended and take priority.

Walk-ins are welcome if appointments are available. To

secure a spot, use the QR code to register. Questions? Call

252-449-4529. All screenings will take place on the Outer

Banks Health Coach vehicle in the parking lot.

Monday, March 10 | 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Rodanthe-Waves-Salvo Community Bldg | 23646 NC 12, Rodanthe

Wednesday, April 16 | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island | 374 Airport Rd, Manteo



March 10



April 16

Namaste with the Sharks

Join us for a FREE yoga class in the Graveyard of the Atlantic exhibit area. Designed for all skill levels, the gate opens at



5:15 p.m. While the Aquarium will not be open, restrooms will be available. Please bring a yoga mat and water. Secure your spot by calling 252-449-4529 as classes fill up quickly!

Wednesdays: March 26 & April 16 | 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island | 374 Airport Rd, Manteo



March 26



April 16

Power of Art Expression Workshop

Thanks to a Community Benefit Grant from Outer Banks Health, Dare Arts provides FREE workshops (including supplies) for cancer patients, caregivers, and survivors. Space is limited and registration is required. Visit DareArts.org/workshops, email DareArtsPrograms@gmail.com or call Dare Arts at 252-473-5558 to reserve your spot.

Wednesday, March 19 | 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16 | 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Cowell Cancer Center Education Room | 4927 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

Lunch & Learn: Benefits of Cardiopulmonary Rehab

Enjoy a healthy lunch while exploring the benefits of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation. Join team members Marcie Juges, Ashley Taylor, and Jenn McLaughlin as they share the ins-and-outs of cardiopulmonary rehab. Topics covered will include lifestyle changes to modify risk factors, improvement of stamina and strength, and education and tools to help manage and improve underlying medical conditions. To secure a spot, use the QR code to register. Questions? Call 252-449-4529.

Wednesday, March 12 | 12:45 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Baum Senior Center | 300 Mustian St, Kill Devil Hills



Saturday, March 22

Duck Woods Country Club

6 p.m. - midnight



A black-tie gala benefiting the effort to enhance well-being and longevity to our community. Enjoy an evening inspired by sun-kissed Sardinia, Italy, one of the five Blue Zones. Featuring live music, dancing, stunning décor, and a Sardinia-inspired culinary journey right here on the Outer Banks.

Individual tickets are available now.

A limited number of Late-Night Tickets will be available starting March 1st for \$100 each and grant access from 9:30 p.m. to 12 a.m.

For more information, call 252-449-5933.

