

Round UP

FOR SENIOR CITIZEN HOSPITALITY CENTER OF DECORAH BEGINS MARCH 20

Renovation campaign underway; Donation address and GoFundMe link provided



By Tanya O'Connor

Oneota Co-op shoppers are invited to “Round Up at the Register” for Senior Citizens Hospitality Center of Decorah Monday, March 20 through Monday, April 3. Commonly referred to as the “Senior Center,” this organization’s stated purpose is to “provide opportunity for social, recreational, educational, and other activities beneficial to members and the community.”

Round Up funds will assist the Senior Center Improvement Campaign, a remodeling initiative to support facility updates at its 806 River Street location in the south sector of Decorah. No significant renovations have occurred since the organization, established in 1969, moved to this location in 1977. The campaign began spring 2022, with restroom renovation a primary goal. “We want to make the restrooms cleaner, safe, and most importantly, handicap accessible,” note Senior Center representatives. “The restrooms must be updated to be compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) regulations.”

In recent discussion with Decorah’s LA Communications (formerly Wennes Communications), center representatives noted that renovation needs could be met should each Winneshiek County household donate thirty dollars to the project (2021 census.gov figures reported 8,156 households in Winneshiek County). Donations may be sent to SCHC, Improvements, 806 River St., Decorah. A GoFundMe link is here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-seniors-renovate-restrooms-at-the-center>. Co-op shoppers are always welcome to “round up” additional funds should they choose to upon checkout as well.

This past March 6, the Senior Center’s Facebook page posted that the “Senior Center will be closed for an indefinite time for some necessary repairs and safety concerns. The updates are necessary, not just cosmetic upgrades. We need the help of the community to help finance these repairs.” Center representatives have provided the following statement to the Co-op on the closure:

“The Senior Citizens Hospitality Center is temporarily closed due to preparations that are underway for the remodel of the bathrooms to bring them up to approved standards. This could take weeks, depending on how construction goes. The Center has made arrangements for some of our activities to be held at different locations. We hope everyone understands and will have patience as we are doing the best we can under the circumstances. We very much miss seeing everyone and socializing. Stay up to date by checking our Facebook page (Senior Citizens Hospitality Center-Senior Adventures) or call (563) 277-1033 for more information.”

About the Senior Center:

The Senior Center is an independently owned nonprofit organization funded through donation (individual and organizational), rental fees (currently not incoming due to closure), annual membership dues and the occasional grant. The Center’s River Street location is the former location of DECO Products. It was made possible through volunteer efforts and donations, and established, notes Center representatives, “because seniors recognized a need for a welcoming spot where they could meet for cards, social events, quilting and other activities.” Until 2019, the site also served as Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging’s congregate meal site.





Although those age 55 and older may become members of the organization, most activities are open to all who wish to converse, and participate with, Winneshiek County's senior population (which census.gov's 2021 data indicates as 22.1% of total residents). Center representatives tell us that activities offered include, but are not limited to: bridge, 500, euchre, exercise (including Tai Chi), writers' workshop, crafts, monthly programs (including 'Healthy Eating' with a Winneshiek Medical Center dietician, and Treasure Hunters) and ukulele jam.

Annual membership is set at five dollars to accommodate those on fixed incomes. Those who are members may vote in elections and voice input regarding the Center's operations. The current Senior Center membership is 152. Center representatives estimate that roughly 560 people (members and non members) may use the facility in 2023.

We asked the Senior Center to invite participants to share what they value about this community-driven organization. We received these responses:

I thought I'd be lost once I retired but then I discovered the Senior Center. I attend many of their activities, where I meet new people, learn interesting things and laugh a lot. It keeps me busy! - Laura

It makes me feel so good to sit back and listen to the conversation and laughter in my card groups at the Senior Center. But the best thing is knowing some of these friends were staying home too much and now they're enjoying getting out with friends. We have a great time at the Senior Center. - Gerry

I really enjoy the Tuesday and Friday morning exercise classes. The instructor makes them fun and effective for all of us, standing or seated. - Sharon

My doctor asked me to stand up and walk across the room. I stood right up without using my hands or arms. He asked me to do that again so I did. I told him I had been going to the free exercise classes at the Senior Citizens Center. The doctor was so excited. Told me to keep going. - Connie

Oneota Co-op round up campaigns are intrinsically tied to the Co-op's community service commitment as outlined in the Co-op Missions and Ends statement. Co-op shoppers are provided the opportunity to round up to the nearest dollar to support this organizational end, which reads as follows:

Oneota Community Co-op Organizational End number seven: "Our members are diverse and engaged, working together and sharing time, energy, and resources to build a resilient and thriving local community."

Oneota Co-op thanks Laura Randolph and Mary Lou Cotton for their willingness to share information regarding the Senior Center and its campaign.

