

# The Boston Globe

## 'I am hoping some of those genes get passed down': Five residents of West Roxbury nursing home celebrate century of life

**Boston, state officials bestow citations to residents**

By Hannah Goeke Globe Correspondent, Updated May 14, 2026

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State Representative Bill MacGregor (standing, left) and State Senator Mike Rush (standing, right) commemorate seniors during a special Centennial Tea Party. Lane Turner/Globe Staff

Five people who grew up during the Great Depression celebrated more than a century of life, surrounded by their families, staff, and fellow residents at a Boston senior care facility.

The German Centre in West Roxbury hosted a special tea party Wednesday for Dorothy Appel, 102; Mary Kingsbery, 101; Theresa DeSantis, 103; Louis Lusardi, 103, and Stanley Ng, the youngest of the group at 100.

“Since opening the campus in West Roxbury in 1914, the German Centre has proudly served residents and families more than 110 years,” the facility’s executive director, Sean O’Grady, said at the event. “When you think about all that our honorees have witnessed throughout their lives, world events, technological advances, changes in society, and the growth of families and community, it is truly remarkable.”

Wearing a military cap, Lusardi, who served as an Army medic on Okinawa Island during World War II, sat at the table with his daughter and niece.

“He never bragged about it, he is just a great family guy,” said his daughter, Ann Hadayia, 65. “He is a hard worker, he never complained, always willing to help people, just everything that makes you live to 103.”

Hadayia and her cousin, Diane Butler, 73, joked that it was probably all the “red wine and salami” that helped Lusardi live so long.



World War II veteran Louis Lusardi has a laugh during a special Centennial Tea Party honoring five residents who have reached the longevity milestone. Lane Turner/Globe Staff

For DeSantis, a longtime member of the Brookline Garden Club, it’s her love for gardening that “always kept her mind sharp,” her grandson, Nicolas DeSantis, said.

“She would always be going and doing stuff,” said DeSantis, 51. “It’s like mind over matter. It just overcomes your body. I am hoping some of those genes get passed down.”



Theresa DeSantis (left), 103, gets a hug from her granddaughter, Carla DeSantis, during a special Centennial Tea Party. Lane Turner/Globe Staff

State Senator Mike Rush, State Representative William MacGregor, and Emily Shea, head of the city's Age Strong Commission, handed out citations to the residents for reaching the century milestone.

In Massachusetts, about 1 out of 3,000 people are 100 years or older, meaning there are around 2,200 centenarians living in the state, according to Dr. Thomas Perls, a geriatrician and director of the [New England Centenarian Study](#) at Boston University.

The right combination of genes plays an important role in longevity and becomes more important the older you get, Perls said.

“Interestingly, it isn’t really lacking genes that are associated with age-related diseases, but rather protective genes that slow down aging and decrease your risk for age-related diseases,” Perls said. “That’s not to say that some habits don’t play a strong role, for example, finding a centenarian who has a history of smoking is extraordinarily rare.”

Ng’s daughter, Jennie Ng, a real estate broker, said her father’s mind has faded over time. But there are still moments when he remembers the things that mattered most to him. Before entering the skilled nursing unit, Ng, a former owner of a Chinese restaurant, loved to swim and walk his dog.

“He is very kind and caring,” she said. “Sometimes seeing outside the grounds of the German Centre will remind him of his dog. He will say ‘Oh, Lucky is coming.’”