

SE MN Area Agency on Aging

Spring Newsletter 2021



Helping older adults and their families age successfully



**Southeastern Minnesota
AREA AGENCY on AGING**

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In The Loop with Laurie

I strongly believe new home construction/rehabilitation projects should have inclusive features built in so individuals have the option to stay in their home as they age. Not many homes are designed with accessible or Universal Design features in mind.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) conducted a Home and Community Preferences survey in 2018 and discovered that 3 out of 4 people ages 50 and older nationwide hope to remain in their current home as they grow older, but only 46 % believe they will be able to do so.

It is critical a portion of new senior housing initiatives incorporate eligibility considerations for lower income older adults. This would include individuals who are served through Minnesota Medicaid's Elderly Waiver (EW) program to ensure housing options are accessible and inclusive of them.

The Rochester Area Foundation is committed to affordable housing efforts and has created a Coalition for Rochester Area Housing. The Coalition is working on a co-design process around senior housing - partnering with Destination Medical Center and University of Minnesota School of Design. A part of this work will be to identify 7-10 participants to help with this project. I applaud their efforts to ensure that people with physical limitations, homeowners who want to stay in their current living situation, care staff, individuals moving to senior housing, those interested in multigenerational housing, and others have a voice at the table.

AARP has also embraced age-friendly housing initiatives as one part of their Livable Communities framework. The goal is to help communities become better places to age well in. The Livable Communities initiative is focused around eight domains of livability centered around aspects of daily and community life. The domains are inter-woven and have an impact on each other: Transportation, Housing, Social participation, Respect and social inclusion, Civic participation and employment, Communication/information, Community support/health services, and Outdoor spaces/buildings.

The Age-Friendly Olmsted County (AFOC) Community Assessment Committee is led by community partners which include County Government, In the City for Good and key community organizations. Housing initiatives are just one of the areas that this cross-sector group is dedicated to working on to ensure that Olmsted County residents have what they need to age well in the community of their choice. A part of this work will be to develop a five-year process that includes an Age-friendly Community Assessment Report and 3-year action plan.

My husband and I built our accessible home using universal design features in the early 1990's. One of the best features is the main floor laundry among others!

Finding Ways to Engage at Every Age,

Laurie

Executive Director

Partnership Highlight–

Winona Friendship Center

Lori Paulson and Marite' Olmstead are senior advocates who provide information, referral and assistance to seniors in Winona County. They can be reached at the Winona Friendship Center located at 251 Main Street in Winona, MN. Their mission is to help older citizens remain independent in their homes. Lori and Marite' can help individuals with Medicare health insurance counseling, assistance completing applications, connection to home services in the area and navigation of systems for long term care services and supports.

Lori has an undergraduate degree in Nutrition Science and a master's degree in Food Science and Nutrition from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She started her professional career in the food industry but, after several years, felt called to do more service-related work. Lori worked as a MediAppS Caseworker, helping to find available solutions for expensive medication costs, prior to joining the Winona Friendship Center as a Senior Advocate in 2017. Lori's thoughts on her favorite moments: "I enjoy working with older adults. I especially enjoy learning about my clients' families and their stories. For instance, one client shared with me what it was like to live and work in communist East Germany prior to her arrival in the United States in her twenties. It is always a wonderful moment when a client enrolls in a program, such as a Medicare Savings Program or Extra Help with Medicare Part D, and the relief that I can see when a financial burden has been relieved. I truly believe that releasing a financial burden can add years of life to a person's life, primarily due to the reduction in stress and worry that was created by that financial burden."

Marite' attended Winona State University and double majored in psychology and sociology



with a minor in gerontology and graduated in 2017. She has worked as a senior advocate for another agency/service area before joining the City of Winona as a senior advocate in 2019. Marite' credits growing up in a three-generation household for impacting her choice to work with older adults professionally as her career. When asked about favorite moments and challenges Marite' reports: "Many of my favorite moments have been during Medicare Open Enrollment season. It is very satisfying to assist others with an overwhelming task and break it down to the point where they feel confident in making their own decisions. I have also made a lot of new friendships with my clients that I appreciate and value. Right now, with the pandemic, I see social isolation as a huge challenge for older adults. Thankfully, the Winona Friendship Center has been working on implementing a variety of virtual programs and getting more technology out into the community, but I know there are still many people out there without these capabilities. Human connection is so vitally important to stay engaged and age successfully."

If you are interested in exploring how a senior advocate can help you or a loved one in Winona county find and understand services and supports available, Lori and Marite' can be contacted by calling: 507-454-7369.

Need help with Medicare and drug costs?



Call
1-800-333-2433
for straight answers.



SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

A service of the Minnesota Board on Aging
and Area Agencies on Aging

Senior LinkAge Line®
can make your life easier

Did you know Medicare
has extra help for
drug premiums,
deductibles,
& co-pays?



Income Limit: \$1,630mo.
(\$2,198 couple)
Asset limit: \$14,790
(\$29,520 couple)

Assets do not include the home you live in or one car.

Other Medicare Savings programs have
slightly lower income and asset limits.

For assistance call
1-800-333-2433



SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

7-17

Return to Community Team Helping Families Navigate new Long-Term Care Guidance

Despite the continued effects that the COVID Pandemic has had on many individuals and service providers, including our own Return to Community staff, our Community Living Specialists have continued to provide support and assistance to as many as possible over the past year. With the Return to Community work being completed from a phone-based format as in-person visits have been suspended, staff have been able to talk with individuals and families about the recent loosening of restrictions for visitation and outings in long term care settings. Here are some of those comments:



- “First time in a year I could see her in person, I could even give her a couple big hugs! It has been a whole year since we could do anything like that!”
- “My sister and I live together, and we love to gamble. After we got our second dose of the vaccine, we took a trip to Treasure Island and won \$3000!”
- “I was able to go home for a few hours on Easter with my wife; it was so nice to have family together.”

The new guidance is a refreshing change and bringing many smiles and increased well-being to families and staff!

Highlights from the new guidance

- Residents may have visitors at any time of the day.
- All visitors will be screened upon entrance.
- Visitors and residents must wear a face mask covering both nose and mouth throughout the visit.
- Visitors must use hand hygiene throughout their visit.
- The resident may choose to have physical contact if they have been fully vaccinated. They must perform hand hygiene before and after physical contact.
- Visitors must remain in residents room while socially distancing from others or they may visit outside.

Contact the facility where your loved one lives for specific details on new protocols.

Read the full updated MDH Long-Term Care guidance report [here.](#)



When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

How to Protect Yourself and Others

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting you from getting sick. Based on what we know about COVID-19 vaccines, people who have been fully vaccinated can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

We're still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. After you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, it's important to keep taking precautions—like wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces—in public places until we know more.

These recommendations can help you make decisions about daily activities after you are fully vaccinated. They are *not* intended for healthcare settings.

Are you fully vaccinated?

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's vaccine

If you don't meet these requirements, you are NOT fully vaccinated. Keep taking all precautions until you are fully vaccinated.

If You've Been Fully Vaccinated You Can:

- ⇒ Visit inside a home or private setting without a mask with other fully vaccinated people of any age.
- ⇒ Visit inside a home or private setting without a mask with one household of unvaccinated people who are not at risk for severe illness.
- ⇒ Travel domestically without a pre- or post-travel test.
- ⇒ Travel domestically without quarantining after travel.
- ⇒ Travel internationally without a pre-travel test depending on destination.
- ⇒ Travel internationally without quarantining after travel.

To learn more: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

American Rescue Plan

Supporting Older Adults in Significant Ways

The American Rescue plan was signed into law by the Biden administration on March 11th to provide relief and support to all Americans who continue to deal with the pandemic and its after effects. Through the advocacy efforts of partnering organizations like the National Council on Aging, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Representatives and many others, this bill has carved out substantial funding for older Americans and the programs that support them. Here is a quick overview of how this bill will support Older Americans in the coming months.

Older American Act Funding

Currently over 11 million older adults rely on Older American Act funding to remain independent. This bill earmarks an additional \$1.43 billion dollars into OAA supports such as nutrition programs, transportation, caregiver supports, elder abuse protections and healthy aging programs.

Medicaid Home Care Services

States will receive a 10% boost in federal contributions to support Medicaid and Home Care Services through March 31st 2022. That's \$12.7 billion dollars invested in low-income older adults and individuals with disabilities so they can receive care at home with a loved one rather than in a nursing home.

COVID Related

\$20 billion has been set aside to improve vaccine administration and distribution as well as \$50 billion for testing, contact tracing and manufacturing of personal protective equipment. Along with this is an additional \$500 million for nursing home strike teams to help manage COVID outbreaks and \$200 million to further support infection control in nursing homes.

Elder Justice

This law includes \$276 million per year for the next 2 years to support programs that combat elder abuse, support elder justice research and innovation, enhance adult protection services and provide additional protections for residents of long-term care facilities.

Infrastructure and Transportation

\$20 billion is earmarked for states, tribes and territories to help cover some of the unforeseen costs of the pandemic-one of which is broadband expansion, as well as improving subways and bus systems, which many older adults rely on.

These are just some of the highlights of the American Rescue Plan. To learn more about this bill go to [NCOA's article](#). The Biden Administration also released the [American Jobs Plan](#) proposal on March 31st. This is still taking shape but includes funding for HCBS organizations, wage increases for home care workers, workforce support and equity investments like broadband, affordable housing, transportation and more.



PEARLS

Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives

PEARLS empowers people through behavioral techniques to actively manage depression and improve their quality of life.

- PEARLS is a community-based treatment program for older adults with depression.
- A trained PEARLS Counselor will meet with you for 8 sessions, customized to your needs.
- Sessions can be held over the phone, on a computer, or in-person.
- You will learn the skills necessary to move into action and make lasting changes.

Organizations Offering PEARLS

- **Elder Network- 507-285-5272**
- **Family Service Rochester- 507-287-2010**
- **WellConnect-www.wellconnectsemn.org**
- **Winona Friendship Center-507-454-5212**

Benefits

- Reduce depressive symptoms
- Improve quality of life and have a more positive outlook
- Become more engaged with family, friends, and activities you enjoy
- Improve physical and mental health



Partner organizations include : Elder Network, Family Service Rochester, NAMI, WellConnect, Winona Friendship Center, SE MN Area Agency on Aging

BEYOND THE WORKDAY

Finding Balance for Working Caregivers and Aging Adults



- ⇒ 1 in 5 people are caring for a loved one providing 24 hours of care per week, on average.
- ⇒ 60% of caregivers were employed in 2020 while also providing care.
- ⇒ 50% of working caregivers are reluctant to tell their supervisor about their caregiving responsibilities.

Being a working caregiver is a situation that will affect almost everyone at some point in life and employers are in a position to offer more meaningful supports and resources to help employees successfully navigate this time. Investing in the well-being of your staff is simply good for business and results in many positive returns for you as well. If you are interested in learning more about the challenges working caregivers face and want to understand how to support them better as an employer, contact Chersten Keillor with the SE MN Area Agency on Aging to learn more and schedule a presentation.



The theme of Older Americans Month (OAM) 2021 is *Communities of Strength*. Older adults have built resilience and strength over their lives through successes, failures, joys, and difficulties. Their stories and contributions help to support and inspire others.

In May, The Administration for Community Living (ACL) will celebrate the strength of older adults and the Aging Network, with special emphasis on the power of connection and engagement in building strong communities.

There are many things we all can do to nurture ourselves, reinforce our strength, and continue to thrive. Connecting with others is one of the most important—it plays a vital role in our health and well-being, and in that of our communities.

<https://acl.gov/oam/2021/older-americans-month-2021>

Fortune Cookies

By Bonnie Dudovitz

Mona has a great idea! This vibrant octogenarian is determined to be the first to know if her recall is slipping beyond what can be considered normal age-related memory loss. An unexpected visit from her son reveals that she has cooked up a way to help herself and others be on the lookout for the early signs of dementia.

Join us for the third virtual event delivered by The Remember Project with funding support from the Minnesota State Arts Board. Dates will be announced in May.



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Get on board!

SEMAAA is currently accepting applications for a new board member for Rice County.

Please contact Laurie Brownell for an application:

laurie@semaaa.org

2021 SEMAAA STAFF

- **Laurie Brownell** – Executive Director
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