

## 2021 SEMAAA Annual Report



The **Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging (SEMAAA)** completed a Strategic Planning process in 2021 with the help of Strategic Consulting and Coaching. One of the most enlightening pieces of this process was an environmental scan along with gathering input through focus groups and surveying stakeholders. We are pleased to share the five strategic priorities established for the next three to five years:

| **Enhance branding and name recognition** | **Diversify funding sources** |

| **Recruit and retain quality staff** |

| **Expand regional input on legislative and MN Board on Aging (MBA) priorities** |

| **Prioritize innovative services for the future** |

*SEMAAA's board members, staff, and stakeholders will meet on a regular basis to prioritize activities to work toward accomplishing these priorities. We will continue to provide updates on our progress in future newsletters.*

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AREA AGENCY on AGING**

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# SEMAAA | 40 Years Later

## *with Laurie Brownell, Executive Director*

In 2021, SEMAAA celebrated 40 years of service and support to older adults in Southeastern Minnesota. As a current leadership team, we are so fortunate to have had a group of dedicated professionals who built the framework of responsive services and extreme passion for aging programs in our region.

The picture below shows the SEMAAA leadership team from the late 80's and below it, the current SEMAAA leadership staff. The young man pictured second from left, with the stylish bangs, is our own Dan Conway. Dan has been a consistent piece of SEMAAA's development team for nearly 35 years.

Dan continues to build strong relationships with area service providers of home and community-based services and connect resources/programs to fill service gap areas throughout the eleven-county area of Southeastern Minnesota. Around the office, Dan has the nickname of "Sunny," which holds some irony for his direct demeanor, yet bright disposition when it comes to helping older adults age well in their communities.

A debt of gratitude goes out to Bill, Dan, Connie, Rose and Arty and many others for their relentless advocacy efforts around shining the spotlight on needed services/gaps for seniors. They started the wonderful work around ensuring older adults have what they needed to remain in their own home and communities of their choice. Kudos and congratulations to current SEMAAA staff and board for all your work to keep the aging network of services and needs in the spotlight for years to come.

*Laurie Brownell, Executive Director*



**Top, L to R:** Bill Markus, Dan Conway, Connie Bagley, Rose Overby, Arty Theye

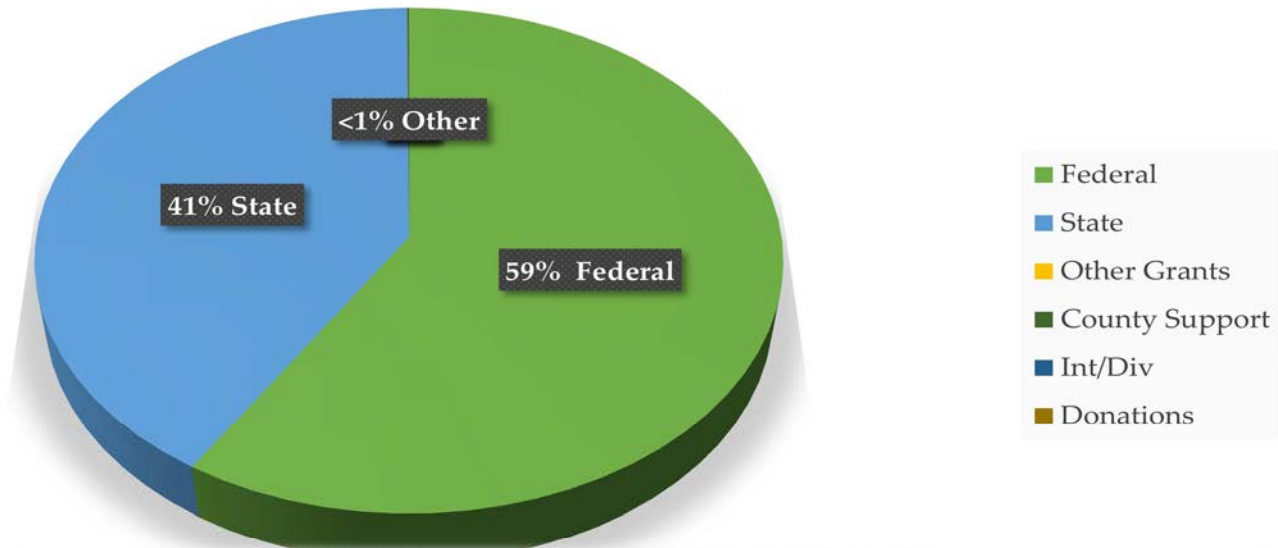
**Bottom, L to R:** Kim Voth, Dan Conway, Laurie Brownell, Anna Thomson, Annie Avery (not pictured: Lori Wacek).

Support and Revenue		
Federal	\$	3,529,157
State	\$	2,448,579
Other Grants	\$	680
County Support	\$	2,300
Int/Div	\$	2,636
Donations	\$	1,393
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,984,745</b>
Expenses		
Salary & Fringe Benefits	\$	1,839,580
Grantee & Contract Awards	\$	3,807,501
Operational	\$	322,824
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>5,969,905</b>
*unaudited totals		
<b>Revenue over Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,840</b>

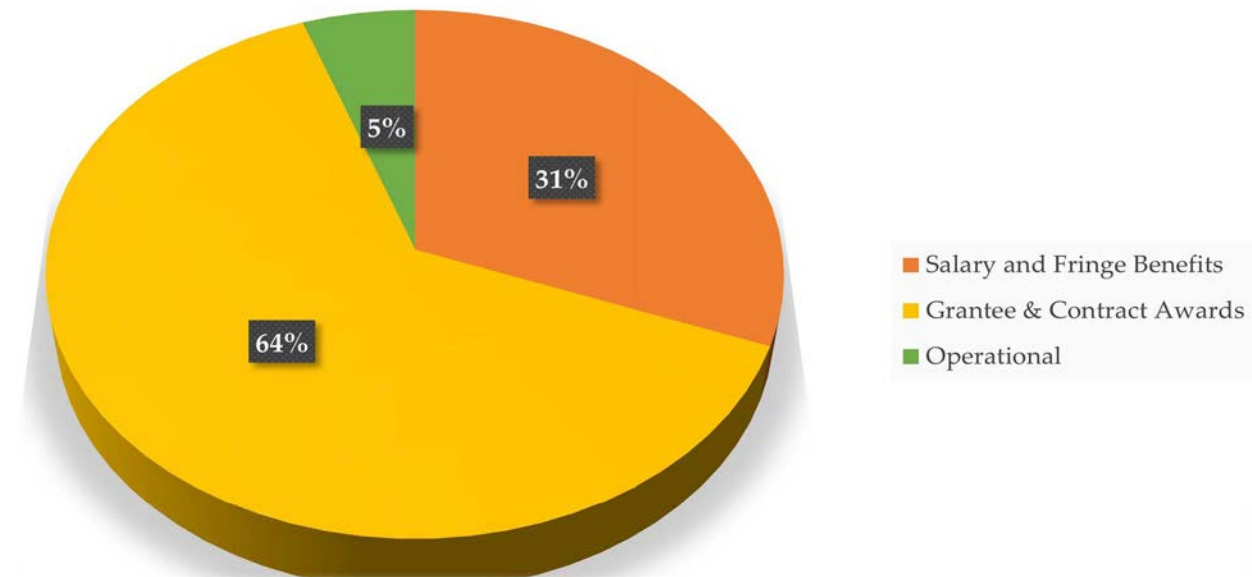
# 2021 Financial Summary



**2021 Revenue: \$5,984,745**



**2021 Expenses: \$5,969,905**





# CARES Act Funding

In 2021 SEMAAA was the recipient of Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES Act) funding through the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA). SEMAAA's Eldercare Development Program (EDP) staff and our Finance team provided technical assistance as needed to applicants. SEMAAA awarded thirteen applicant agencies over **\$352,000**. Funding was targeted to regional providers serving rural areas with a focus on serving older adults in the areas of mental health counseling/social isolation, home delivered meals, and technology. **Agencies receiving funding included:**

## SEMCAC

- Home Delivered Meals

## Family Service Rochester, Inc

- Mental Health/PEARLS Counseling

## WellConnect

- PEARLS Counseling

## Prairie Island Tribal Community

- Technology

## Senior Resources of Freeborn County

- Technology

## Elder Network

- PEARLS Counseling
- Technology

## Neighbors in Action (Houston County)

- Technology

## Three Rivers

- Home Delivered Meals

## Winona Friendship Center

- Technology and PEARLS Counseling

## La Crescent Dining

- Home Delivered Meals

# SEMAAA Recap:



SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

2021 brought another year of virtual meetings and

classes for the **Senior LinkAge Line®** team. Staff were able to telecommute from the comfort of their own homes and did not have to risk their health as the pandemic continued. The staff have gotten very good at providing outreach virtually. We have partnered with other regions to fill Medicare, fraud, and long-term care planning classes. The **Preadmission Screening** team and **Return to Community** staff have successfully been able to provide education to the nursing facilities in our region. All the virtual classes, meetings and trainings have saved time and mileage, and have proven effective. Staff do miss the face-to-face contact of outreach at health fairs, presentations and providing 1:1 assistance to consumers.

**In 2021, staff took an average of 928 calls per month**

October 15th through December 7th was a very busy time for the Senior LinkAge Line® as they assisted consumers with Medicare Open Enrollment. Staff are highly trained to help consumers from all over the state navigate the parts of Medicare and help them make informed choices regarding health care. In 2021, staff took an average of 928 calls per month, but during Open Enrollment the number was a bit higher. The Preadmission Screening team processes an average of 415 referrals from hospitals each month.

The tool staff used to enter client data was phased out at the end of summer, and all staff were trained on a new client tracking system. This brought many challenges and a great deal of stress as we attempted to navigate a system very different from what we had used for many years. The bugs are still being worked out, but staff have powered through like champions!

Senior LinkAge Line® staff never know what kind of calls may be coming their way; it may be a request to find help shoveling snow, questions about a power of attorney document, help comparing Medicare Part D plan options, or any of 50 different topics. Sometimes the caller just needs someone to listen to them. **We are thankful for our professional staff who work hard to make a difference in the lives of the people they help.**

*Contributed by Annie Avery, SLL Supervisor*

**SENIOR LINKAGE LINE**  
**800-333-2433**

# Return to Community: 2021 Recap

**Return to Community services** continued to be provided to individuals and caregivers through a hybrid model approach throughout 2021. Phone-based assistance remained the primary means of interaction due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on both individual and employee health and safety. On July 6, 2021, in-person visits became allowable, but in a very limited capacity and following the guidelines set forth by the MN Board on Aging. Challenges with skilled nursing facility outbreaks, visitor restrictions, the emergence of the Omicron variant, and individual preferences all played a role in phone-based assistance remaining as the primary and necessary method of reaching our older adults.

**Despite missing the advantages that in-person interactions provide, the Return to Community staff have continued to provide exceptional assistance to those needing help to remain living successfully in the community.**

This year also brought unprecedented challenges in the form of staffing shortages in so many of our skilled nursing facilities as well as home health care agencies causing a dramatic ripple effect felt by many. Return to Community staff spent countless hours talking to individuals and families struggling, frustrated, and filled with emotion as they work through times of crisis. The lack of available options for in-home supports, nursing home bed openings, affordable housing, and rising costs have made 2021 like none other. It has helped our Return to Community staff gain a new perspective, work closely with our Office of Ombudsman for Long Term Care, empower individuals and families to be their own best advocate, and to take even the smallest successes as positive wins!

These wins came in so many forms this year, but

we'll take them all! Some examples include:

- ◇ **8 months of phone calls and advocating to help a long term care resident finally get a dentist appointment scheduled**
- ◇ **Working diligently to help an individual struggling with paying his bills to apply and be approved for emergency assistance to help pay his rent and heating costs plus an extra \$20 a month for food**
- ◇ **Assisting an individual admitted to one nursing home for therapy, transfer to another nursing home and then after 9 months of looking for an available assisted living apartment, finally discharge to her new home with a hospital bed delivery coordinated by our RTC staff**
- ◇ **A referral from the Ombudsman - assisting an individual unhappy and not able to afford her assisted living apartment find a new more affordable senior apartment and utilize supports from Elder Network and private hire services all within her budget**
- ◇ **Providing ongoing follow up calls to the grieving widow of a previous Return to Community client who now has signed on for services and follow along herself**

Our Community Living Specialists worked hard during these difficult times and went the extra mile over and over. 405 individuals signed on for Return to Community follow along services, while another 365 individuals were provided education and resources. An additional 160 individuals were given Senior Linkage Line information and determined to be remaining permanently in long term care.

***What a year it's been!***

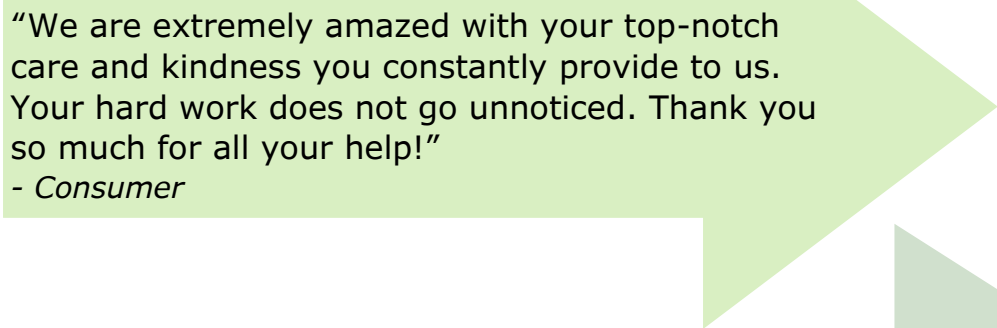
*Contributed by Lori Wacek,  
RTC Supervisor*



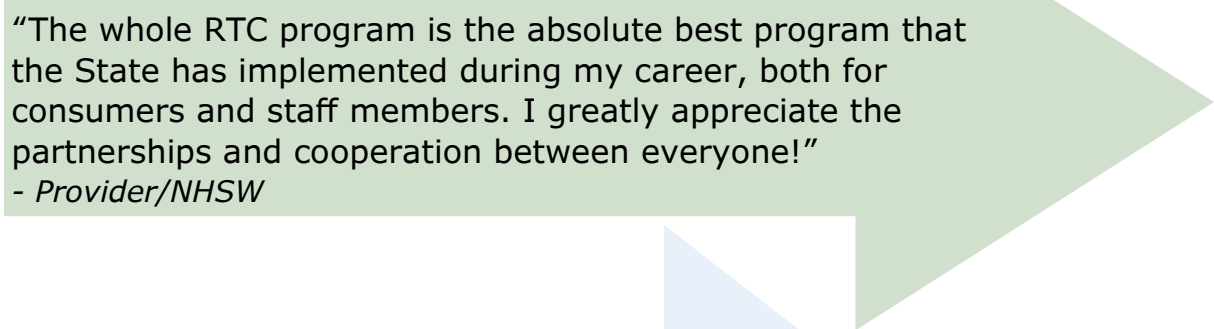
**SENIOR LINKAGE LINE**

# MINNESOTA SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

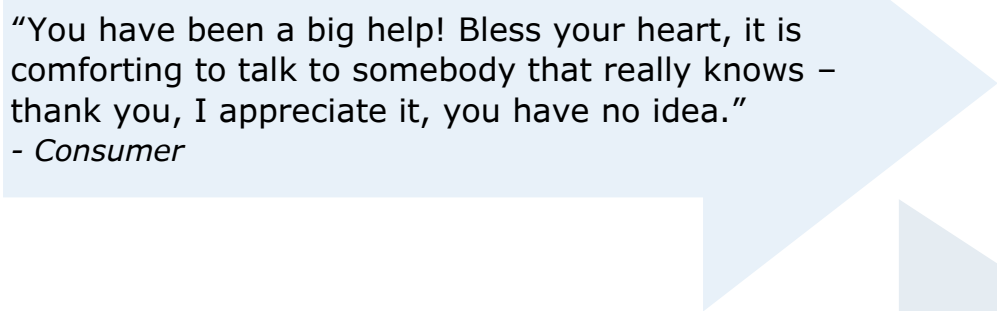
*making a difference in Minnesota communities*



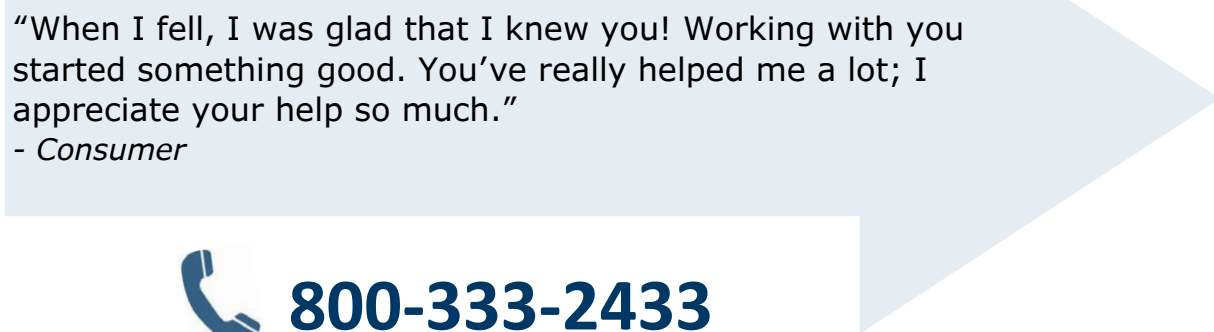
"We are extremely amazed with your top-notch care and kindness you constantly provide to us. Your hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank you so much for all your help!"  
- Consumer



"The whole RTC program is the absolute best program that the State has implemented during my career, both for consumers and staff members. I greatly appreciate the partnerships and cooperation between everyone!"  
- Provider/NHSW



"You have been a big help! Bless your heart, it is comforting to talk to somebody that really knows – thank you, I appreciate it, you have no idea."  
- Consumer



"When I fell, I was glad that I knew you! Working with you started something good. You've really helped me a lot; I appreciate your help so much."  
- Consumer



**800-333-2433**



# Age Friendly Efforts in 2021

**Minnesota** currently has **13 communities** that have joined the AARP network of Age Friendly Communities and States.

The State of MN also recently announced that they are joining the Age Friendly network and began collecting input via an online survey earlier in the year. States that join commit to engaging older residents in efforts to improve their state's infrastructure, systems, and social environment.

**The State of MN will be focusing on a slightly different set of domains they felt were uniquely important to our state. They are:**

- ⇒ Built Environment: Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- ⇒ Transportation
- ⇒ Community Support and Health Services
- ⇒ Communication and Information
- ⇒ Social Participation and Inclusion
- ⇒ Work, Volunteering, and Civic Engagement
- ⇒ Safety, Basic Needs, and Affording Aging
- ⇒ Emergency Preparedness and Community Satisfaction

**SEMAAA Eldercare Development Program** staff held three Age Friendly listening sessions this fall with participants from Albert Lea, Owatonna, Pine Island, Plainview, Lake City, and Wabasha as part of the statewide efforts. **The goal was to gather data surrounding what older Minnesotans want and need in their communities to be healthy, engaged, and safe in later life.** Currently, there is no official report resulting from these statewide conversations; however, we did hear some

common themes from our sessions:

- ⇒ Accessing services and building awareness of what is available for older adults is challenging.
- ⇒ Services may be available in the larger towns - but not so much in rural areas.
- ⇒ There is a need for affordable housing options, home modification programs, and unique living arrangements besides independent and assisted living.
- ⇒ Flexible transportation options are needed – including in rural areas.
- ⇒ Getting people interested in planning ahead for aging in place is important.

The State will compile the feedback from all MN listening sessions to inform their action plan moving forward.

For more information about statewide efforts, visit [mn.gov/dhs/age-friendly-mn](https://mn.gov/dhs/age-friendly-mn)

Community Age Friendly efforts are built around the **World Health Organization's 8 domains of livability**, pictured below. Making improvements in any of these areas create more welcoming, safe, and inclusive spaces for all.





**Northfield and Olmsted County** are two of the thirteen communities currently working on their Age Friendly action plans in the SE MN region. EDP staff have been working closely with these communities and leaders to offer technical assistance and support throughout the last year.

In addition to working with established communities EDP staff are available to support new communities such as **Oronoco and Pine Island**, who are beginning to explore the initiative and recruit partners and community champions to commit to the work.

AGE FRIENDLY  
**minnesota**



Chersten Keillor and Nan Just distribute Northfield's Age Friendly gaps analysis survey.

**The Health and Wellness team in Northfield** is currently seeking input from adults 50+ on the availability of home and community-based services via a survey. Results of this survey will help guide the team as they consider the need to add new services or focus on building awareness of currently available options people may not be taking advantage of.

*Contributed by Chersten Keillor, EDP*

**The Age Friendly Olmsted County** team has completed their community survey, released their report, and is currently identifying projects to be worked on in their action plan. Three committees have been formed. One committee is examining resources and supports for:

- ⇒ Older adults who, like most of us, are wanting to stay in their current homes
- ⇒ Older adults with chronic conditions
- ⇒ Their caregivers

Another committee is looking at collecting, curating, and actively making available information for remaining at home and preparations to do so.

The third is looking at strategies for participation, influence, and advocacy in community policies, planning, and development projects.

Contact [Dan Conway](#) or [Chersten Keillor](#) to learn more about this initiative.

 **Southeastern Minnesota  
AREA AGENCY on AGING**

*Age Friendly  
Efforts in 2021*

## *2022 Board of Directors*

**Jenelle Cummings, *Chair*** (Mower County)

**Jean Eaton, *Vice Chair*** (Freeborn County)

**Mike Hancock, *Secretary*** (Olmsted County)

**Marie Hlava, *Treasurer*** (Member At-Large)

**Maggie Cook** (Member At-Large)

**Rita Fox** (Wabasha County)

**Marjorie Fuller** (Fillmore County)

**Karen Hanson** (Winona County)

**Dwight Jennings** (Member At-Large)

**Valerie Knutson** (Steele County)

**Dave Vandergon** (Goodhue County)

Below, SEMAAA Board Members Marie Hlava (Treasurer) and Jean Eaton (Vice-Chair) with Chuck Ackman of Senator Amy Klobuchar's staff during a recent Dementia Friends Workshop in Pine Island.





# thank you

## Outgoing Board Members



**Marti Riley (Olmsted County), Past Board Chair:** Marti completed her two-term, 6-year commitment in December of 2021. SEMAAA is eternally grateful to Marti for her leadership and guidance as SEMAAA Board Chair during the beginning of the pandemic and through 2020.

*A few of Marti's outstanding contributions include:*

Represented SEMAAA and older adults as a part of a mental health awareness panel (summer of 2019). Welcomed AAA and MBA staff to Rochester as SEMAAA hosted the Out-State AAA meeting (September 2019). Led an internal Strategic Planning Retreat of staff and Board (October 2019).

Increased collaboration with community partners through COVID Relief funding (2020 and beyond).

Represented SEMAAA on the Olmsted County Senior Housing Project Coalition between City, County, Mayo Clinic, and Rochester Area Foundation to address gaps in senior housing needs (2021).

Thank you for your commitment and passion to older adults, especially in the areas of technology and social isolation.

**Brad Lohrbach (Dodge County), Past Treasurer:** Brad was a SEMAAA board member for six years and has served as Secretary for 1 year and Treasurer for 3 years. Brad completed his second term with the SEMAAA Board of Directors at the end of December.

Brad was an employee of Family Service Rochester for 38 years and 20 of those years as Executive Director.

Brad did a wonderful job of breaking down complicated Treasurer's Reports into a more understandable version of what we should be focusing on. We are grateful to Brad for guiding the leadership transition during SEMAAA's Executive Director search process.

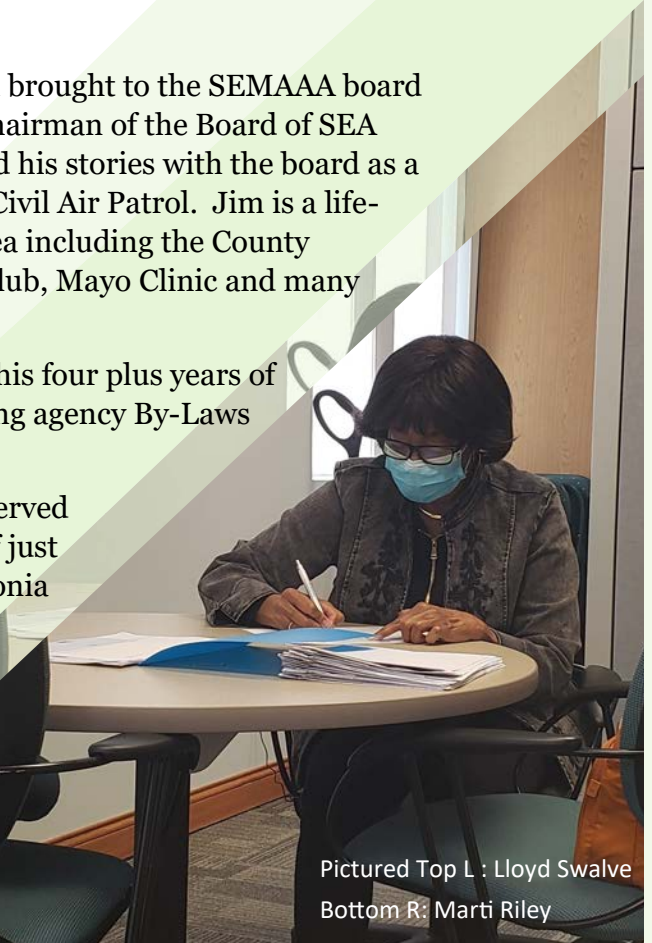
**Jim Hanesworth (Houston County) – Board member:** Jim brought to the SEMAAA board his outstanding business background as the President and Chairman of the Board of SEA Land Chemical for 25 years and other companies. Jim shared his stories with the board as a pilot and personnel officer of the La Crosse Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol. Jim is a life-long volunteer with several agencies in the La Crosse, WI area including the County Commission on Aging, Salvation Army Board, East Rotary Club, Mayo Clinic and many more.

We appreciated Jim's wealth of knowledge that he shared in his four plus years of service to SEMAAA. We will miss Jim's expertise in developing agency By-Laws and deep knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order.

**Lloyd Swalve (Fillmore County) – Board member:** Lloyd served multiple terms on the SEMAAA Board; I think we lost count of just exactly how many! Lloyd was the Administrator of the Caledonia Care & Rehabilitation Center for 19 years.

Lloyd had a strong interest in SEMAAA's pre-admission screening program and was an outstanding advocate for this service.

Thank you, Lloyd, for your support to ensure that congregate dining in Mabel MN continues to support individuals in rural communities.



Pictured Top L : Lloyd Swalve  
Bottom R: Marti Riley





**Live  
well**



**Age  
well**

