



2023 Winter Newsletter

Helping older adults & their families age successfully

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2746 Superior Dr NW, Suite 300
Rochester, MN 55901
507-288-6944 | semaaa.org

AGE FRIENDLY minnesota



Age Friendly Freeborn County: Jay Happla (AARP), Jean Eaton (SEMAAA Board Chair), Shari Sprague (Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director), Brad Edwin (Freeborn County Commissioner) and other Freeborn County service providers.



AARP welcomes **Wabasha and Kellogg** into the Network of Age Friendly States and Communities with SEMAAA Board Member, Rita Fox.

When I was young, I had a “healthy distrust” of the big man in the red suit. I wasn’t quite sure why I needed to share my Christmas Wish List with him. Although I did feel a connection with his little helpers – the busy elves that made things happen. In our world, we are very blessed to have outstanding home and community-based providers who are the equivalent to SEMAAA’s Elves who work very hard each day and are extremely competent at what they do to help older adults age well in their homes and communities.

LOOP

IN THE
With Laurie

It warms my heart to see so many pictures sprinkled throughout this newsletter that gives our readers a glimpse of the magic that happens all year long. The visions of ladies in red dancing, harps, cowboy hats, corn hole games, holiday bingo, drumming, chair volleyball, needleless knit scarves and of course a lot of delicious food will be dancing in our heads as we get ready to ring in a new year.

Sending many blessings to all of the folks that dedicate their time and talents to support older adults living & aging well in Southeastern Minnesota.



Laurie Brownell,

Executive Director
SEMAAA





Staff Highlight: ElderCare Development

Welcome Chris Johnson to her new role within SEMAAA!

Chris Johnson has worked for SEMAAA for the past 5 years in the role of Resource Coordinator, in the Return to Community Department. Before joining SEMAAA, Chris worked as a Physical Therapist Assistant with Centrex Rehab, and in many local Skilled Nursing Facilities. She lives in rural Olmsted County with her husband and three daughters.

Chris is excited to learn and expand, but also bring her experience and knowledge from her past work experiences into EDP work to explore options and work with local agencies to meet the growing and changing needs of the long-term care support system. With the goal of helping all people age in their home, if that is their wish.
Welcome to EDP, Chris!

Medicare Savings Programs

Low-income older adults and adults with disabilities may qualify to receive financial assistance from the Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs). MSPs help millions of Americans access Medicare coverage at a reduced cost, yet only about half of eligible people in Minnesota are enrolled.

The MSPs cover Medicare premiums and may also cover Medicare out-of-pocket expenses for those who are eligible. MSPs offer relief from these Medicare costs, allowing people to spend that money on other necessities like food, housing, or transportation.

If your gross income is less than \$1,661 (assets less than \$10,000) as a single person, or gross income less than \$2,240 (assets less than \$18,000) as a couple, you may qualify. Call the Senior LinkAge Line at 800-333-2433 and a specialist can explain the programs, and help you get an application to apply.

Expanded access to Part D Extra Help

The Medicare Extra Help program helps low-to-modest income people pay for their prescription drugs. Currently, there are two tiers of Extra Help: partial and full. Beginning in 2024, everyone eligible for partial Extra Help will automatically become eligible for full Extra Help. This means that they will have greatly reduced Part D costs.

The Social Security Administration website (www.ssa.gov) has more information about the Extra Help program, including income and asset guidelines and how to apply. You can also call the **Senior LinkAge Line® at 800-333-2433** for help.





Freeborn County Memory Café *2023 Highlights*

The Freeborn County Memory Café meets on the 2nd Monday and 2nd Thursday of each month at 2pm at the Freeborn Senior Center. A memory Café is a gathering for anyone with any level of memory loss and their friends and families. Join them for fun events that are held in a safe and welcoming environment and meet some people in similar situations. You do not need to be a member at the Senior Center to join! Contact Shari at 507-373-3938 or Jean at 507-383-7880 for more information.





Mower County Senior Center: 2023 Highlights

Assorted photos: In 2023, the Mower County Senior Center took to the road to visit Grand Meadow and share information about available programs and activities. They also screened a documentary for Veteran's Day, served a Thanksgiving meal to nearly 200 older adults, and held a program on estate planning with a local attorney. For more information on available programs, contact MCS at 507-433-2370.





WISH LIST:

Board Members!
Board Members!
Board Members!

For more information, please contact
Laurie Brownell at Laurie@semaaa.org
or 507-288-6944.

To view Board Member qualifications
and responsibilities, or to fill out an
application, visit semaaa.org/volunteer



Getting Crafty



Seven residents of Evergreen Place in Pine Island creating knit scarves without needles using "Off The Hook" yarn. The yarn was provided with support from SEMAAA and the Pine Island Senior Citizens.

Pictured: Joanne Sanborn, Gail Hickey, Cyrilla Abbott, Margo Bremer, Jo Buck, Gladys Jensen, Lois Holst, and SEMAAA Board Treasurer Marie Hlava

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment & General Enrollment Periods

The busy Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Period kicked off October 15th, 2023, and just concluded on December 7th.

Senior Senior LinkAge Line® staff assisted thousands of Minnesota Medicare beneficiaries with navigating, enrolling, or changing their Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D plan options during this active period. The conclusion of the Annual Open Enrollment Period will usher in another enrollment period for 2024:

The Medicare Advantage open enrollment period starts on January 1st and continues through March 31st.

This period allows beneficiaries who are already enrolled in Medicare Advantage to:

- Switch to Original Medicare, a Medigap policy, and enroll in a Part D plan (Beneficiaries applying for Medigap/supplemental coverage might be subject to underwriting depending on circumstances).
- Switch to a different Medicare Advantage plan.
- Note: Only one plan change is allowed during this window.



Pictured: SEMAAA Executive Director Laurie Brownell participates in chair volleyball during a nutrition site visit in Spring Grove, Minnesota.



We are beyond thankful to have worked with you



Pam Speltz

Preadmission Screening Specialist

SEMAAA would like to thank Pam Speltz for 8+ years working on the Preadmission Screening team! She has been an amazing asset to SEMAAA and the PAS team! She has been a leader through many changes, but continually works with integrity, a strong work ethic, and perseverance. We wish her well in retirement and know she will find time to enjoy the wonderful things life brings, in addition to the house remodeling projects! Pam will be missed greatly by all of us!

Cea Grass

Senior LinkAge Line® Outreach Specialist

Thank you to Cea Grass for her tireless work in Steele and Rice Counties over this last year! We are grateful for her work providing Medicare fraud presentations in partnership with local law enforcement. She has also worked with individuals at various community locations to assist older adults with Medicare issues, Social Security questions, public programs screenings, and various other things. We look forward to having her transition to a volunteer in Steele County to assist those who need a one-on-one visit!



SEMAAA Board

Jean Eaton, *Chair* - Freeborn County
Dave Vandergon, *Vice-Chair* - Goodhue County
Marie Hlava, *Treasurer* - Member At-Large
Mike Hancock, *Secretary* - Olmsted County
David Beimers - Rice County
Maggie Cook - Member At-large
Jenelle Cummings - Mower County
Rita Fox - Wabasha County
Majorie Fuller - Fillmore County
Karen Hanson - Winona County
Dwight Jennings - Member At-Large
OPEN - Dodge County
OPEN - Houston County
OPEN - Steele County

SEMAAA Staff

Laurie Brownell - Executive Director
Dan Conway - Lead Eldercare Developer
Chris Johnson - Eldercare Developer
Kim Voth - Finance Director/Grants Manager
Laurie Marreel - Grants Administrator
Patti Schad - Finance Assistant
Anna Thomson - Office Manager
Annie Avery - SLL Contact Center Manager
Starla Inman - SLL Resource Specialist
Tambi Lokken - SLL Resource Specialist
Laurie Magnus - SLL Resource Specialist
Jone Trapp - SLL Resource Specialist
Chad Wojchik - SLL Resource Specialist
Cea Grass - SLL Outreach Specialist
Nicole Cummings - Preadmission Screening
Jen McLaughlin - Preadmission Screening
Pam Speltz - Preadmission Screening
Lori Wacek - SLL Resource Coordination Supervisor
Jay Hall - SLL Resource Coordinator
Sara Kohrs - SLL Resource Coordinator
Emily Krowiorz - SLL Resource Coordinator



The SEMAAA Board of Directors and staff send warm wishes this Holiday Season. May it be bright and filled with laughter & love!

Live Well ~ Age Well