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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first 2015 edition of MNRAAA NEWS! I hope you will enjoy reading the articles and updates and that you will contact us if you have comments or questions.

The first month of the new year has been very busy, especially with activities related to our transition from an agency that contracts for staff to an agency that will be the employer of staff. On January 29, Aurora Consulting LLC led our first Governance Committee and Transition Team meetings. The meetings were very productive and everyone involved is committed to a positive experience.


For your information, the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) has set their 2015 Legislative Priorities. They include:

1. Home and Community-Based Services: Options and Information;
2. Education and Support for Vulnerable Adults;
3. Supporting Caregivers;
4. Prepare Minnesota for Alzheimer’s Disease; and
5. Supporting Individuals to Take Action on Long Term Care.

For additional information about these priorities, visit www.managing.org. Click on “Advocate” followed by “Legislative Priorities”.

In closing, I encourage you to visit FaceAgingMN.org, a statewide campaign to raise awareness about the issues that accompany the reality of a rapidly aging society. The Face Aging MN campaign was created by the Long-Term Care Imperative, a legislative collaborative effort that began in 1999 between Minnesota’s two long-term care provider associations: Care Providers of Minnesota and LeadingAge Minnesota. Visit

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The Southwest Initiative Foundation is conducting an assessment to examine the needs of aging residents in southwest Minnesota and potential strategies for making the region a better place for aging residents to live. As part of that assessment, they are inviting providers, advocates, and other professionals with experience or expertise working on aging issues to complete an online survey. Results from the survey will help direct their future grant making efforts. The online survey can be accessed by clicking the link below:

<https://na2.se.voxco.com/se/1145/AgingInSWMN/>

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Mission Statement

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc. is the gateway to resources for older adults, caregivers and service providers in the twenty-seven counties of southwest Minnesota.

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the Face Aging MN website to meet Helen, learn if we are ready for the aging of our population and to join the conversation. "In a society that celebrates youth, it's time to face aging."

Regards,

Linda Giersdorf

Survey continued page 1

Survey responses will be gathered through the first week of February. After taking 15 minutes to complete the survey, feel free to share the survey link with your colleagues. If you have any questions about the project or difficulty accessing the survey, you can contact Melanie Ferris at Wilder Research Melanie.Ferris@wilder.org. (Please note that we are one of multiple organizations sending this survey out to their distribution lists. Feel free to disregard this notice if you have already responded to the survey.) ■



February 15

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

At the Heart of MnRAAA Volunteer Work

There are many reasons people choose to volunteer. Volunteering promotes personal growth and self-esteem; it brings people together, building camaraderie and new friendships; it strengthens your community; and it is a way to give back and make a difference. I like how Harriet Naylor, an early advocate for volunteers and for leaders of volunteers, described volunteering: "Volunteering can be an exciting, growing, enjoyable experience. It is truly gratifying to serve a cause, practice one's ideals, work with people, solve problems, see benefits, and know one had a hand in them."

I imagine MnRAAA volunteers would strongly agree with Ms. Naylor's sentiment. As their volunteer coordinator, I would like to share examples of how they are meeting those philanthropic goals. I will begin with a broad view of what the volunteers have accomplished. During 2014's Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP) - October through December - MnRAAA volunteers provided 1,239 hours of counseling/outreach to Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. That's up 220 hours from the same time period in 2013. This OEP, 68 enrollment events were held in the MnRAAA service area. These events were organized and conducted by MnRAAA volunteers and staff. In addition to these events, numerous individual appointments were scheduled for those not able to attend.

As an agency, we certainly appreciate the numbers listed above, but what motivates us to continue with our work are the personal stories of success and improving the lives of the people we serve. Here are a few examples:

- A couple, who were fairly new to Medicare, came to an OEP site for the first time this year. One of them takes numerous expensive medications. Their insurance agent had enrolled them into one of the drug plans he represented. By having a Senior LinkAge Line® volunteer research Medicare drug plan options for 2015, this couple is expected to save at least \$3,000 in drug costs for the upcoming year.
- Another couple also attended an OEP site for the first time this year. The husband was recently retired and the couple was trying to figure out if the wife should stay on his retiree health plan or enroll in a Medicare health and drug plan. Upon reviewing coverage under both options it was easy for them to decide to keep coverage under the retiree plan. The retiree plan has an annual out-of-pocket spending limit of \$800 for prescriptions – something not available under any of the Medicare options.
- This year, many Medicare beneficiaries needed assistance because their plan was either leaving the market or leaving their service area. Staff and volunteers at the OEP sites were able to listen to these beneficiaries concerns about losing their plan and reassure them that other comparable plans were available. They were then assisted with researching other options and through the enrollment process. At times it was necessary for volunteers to meet with these individuals on multiple occasions.

There are more examples I could give, but these certainly exemplify the reasons at the heart of why MnRAAA volunteers do the work that they do and are appreciated so greatly. ■



Long Distance Caregiving

A Growing Phenomenon

It usually starts with a call: A father informs you he's been diagnosed with congestive heart failure. Your mom's neighbor says she's noticed that Mom hasn't been herself lately. A sibling tells you it's about time you came down south to visit Dad.

Caregiving is often triggered by a crisis and all of a sudden, an adult child is forced to come to grips with a newfound role as a long-distance caregiver. Thankfully, caregivers can take certain steps to help ease the stress of the task. Collecting information on a loved one, assembling a support team and staying in touch with the people involved are a few ways that caregivers can take charge from afar.

A Growing Phenomenon

It is not uncommon today for children to live far from their parents. Baby Boomers are now learning what it is like to care for their parents from far away.

Approximately seven million adults, including more than three million Baby Boomers, provide or manage care for a relative or friend over the age of 55 who lives at least an hour away. Like the changing patterns of living, gender roles have evolved, too. Men now represent more than 40% of caregivers according to a report by the National Institute on Aging. Meanwhile, a study by MetLife Mature Market Institute in conjunction with the National Alliance for Caregiving indicated that 23 percent of long-distance caregivers are the sole primary caregiver.

Whether primary or secondary, man or woman, caregiving from afar is loaded with anxiety-producing questions such as: How do I make sure Mom or Dad receives the proper care? Where do I find the necessary care services? How do I balance my life here with caring for him or her there?

MNRAAA has a new resource called the Caregiver Resource Guide available to assist you. Contact Gail, at 507-389-8869 or ggwaldner@rndc.org to request a copy. ■

New Staff Highlight

Bruce Kyllonen, based out of the Slayton office, joined MNRAAA in December as a Community Living Specialist. Bruce has been an RN for the past 14 years and has worked in a wide variety of clinical settings. These include hospital, home health care, long term care and Rehab and Utilization management. He has served as a member of the United States Army Reserves for the past 12 years and recently completed serving active duty for 14 months as a Case Manager. He was stationed in El Paso, TX. Bruce lives in Sleepy Eye with his wife Jackie and three children. ■

Communities for a Lifetime

Is your community a **Livable community**? Is it one where individuals and families of all ages can easily live and move around in?

MNRAAA has resources available and can offer staff assistance to develop Communities for a Lifetime. For more information contact Gail, Program Development and Coordination at 507-389-8869 or ggwaldner@rndc.org. ■

2015 Grants/Contracts

Title III-B/Supportive Services: \$193,533

Provider / Project	Service Area
Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services Legal Advocacy for Older Americans Project	27 Counties of MNRAAA
Meeker Council on Aging Volunteer Driver Program	Meeker County
Central Community Transit CCT Senior Transportation Program	Kandiyohi, Renville Counties
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota A.C.E. Chore Services	Cottonwood County
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota A.C.E. Telephone Reassurance & One to One Peer Counseling	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock Counties
Interfaith Caregivers – FIA in Faribault County Homemaker/Chore Program	Faribault County
Yellow Medicine East Community Education Granite Falls Intergenerational Chore Service	Chippewa, Yellow Medicine Counties
VINE Faith in Action Caring Connection	Blue Earth, Nicollet Counties

Title III-C 1 and 2/Nutrition Services: \$1,871,402 (Includes NSIP and State funds)

Provider / Project	Service Area
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota LSS Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Programs	Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Sibley, Waseca, Watonwan Counties
Prairie Five CAC, Inc. Prairie Five Congregate/Home Delivered Meals Programs	Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties

Title III-D/Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Services: \$19,400

Provider / Project	Service Area
VINE Faith in Action VINE FIA: Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs	Blue Earth, Nicollet Counties
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota A.C.E. Evidence-Based Programs	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock Counties

Title III-E/National Family Caregiver Support Services: \$168,828

Provider / Project	Service Area
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota A.C.E. Respite and Counseling	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock Counties
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota LSS Caregiver Support and Respite Program	Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville Counties
Prairie Five CAC, Inc. CARE: Caregiver and Resource Education	Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties
Interfaith Caregivers – FIA in Faribault County Caregiver Support and Respite Program	Faribault, Martin Counties
Wellspring Faith in Action Family Caregiver Project	Watonwan County
Consumer Directions, Inc. Title III Self-Directed Services	27 Counties of MNRAAA

Live Well at Home Grant RFP

The Aging and Adult Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services has released the Live Well at Home (LWAH) Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) for grant funding. (Formerly Community Service/ Services Development (CS/SD).) Up to \$250,000 per grant with a required match is available.

Purpose: To develop and/or provide services for older Minnesotans to live in the community.

1. Allow local communities to improve their capacity to develop, strengthen, integrate programs.
2. Maintain home and community-based services for individuals' age 65 and older and at risk of long-term nursing home use and/or spending down into Medical Assistance.
3. Proposals may include strengthening services for the caregiver support network.

Link to the RFP:

<http://www.mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/continuing-care/grants-rfps/apply.jsp>

Proposal development assistance:

Technical assistance is available from your local MNRAAA Program Development and Coordination staff. For more information contact Elaine at espain@rndc.org or Gail at ggwaldner@rndc.org. ■



Senior LinkAge Line® (SLL) Statewide Year in Review

Wow, it's hard to believe that another year has come to an end. Lets take a few minutes to look back at 2014 and all that we've accomplished together. In 2014, we:

- Helped 122,036 people – consumers, caregivers and other professionals (39% increase)
- Conducted 263,026 sessions, which includes both follow-ups and inquiries (50% increase)
- Held 3,995 outreach and education events and activities, such as booths, enrollment events, Senior Surf Days and New-to-Medicare sessions. (down 28% from 2013's 5,531 events)
- Issued 10,719 verification codes in 2014 (6% decrease but that's still a lot of codes!)

Pre-Admission Screening

It has been just over a year since the launch of Pre-Admission Screening (PAS) in November, 2013. In 2014, we received 63,874 PAS referral forms.

One Stop Shop for Minnesota Seniors

This past year, the SLL: A One Stop Shop for Minnesota kept plugging along with the help of our esteemed Lieutenant Governor, as it had in previous years. In 2014, the One Stop had:

- 263,365 contacts, (including PAS)
- 122,067 clients served (just over half called us before)
- 1622 called for assistance with employment or volunteering
- We have helped people invest an estimate \$2.2 million in volunteer time since the May 2012 launch of ShareMN, the volunteer component of the One Stop (assumes a 5 hour per week investment of volunteer time).

Medicare Part D

The SLL completed another successful Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D open enrollment period on December 7, 2014. This year, staff helped 27,718 individuals with Medicare over-the-phone and in-person, which is 2,247 more beneficiaries than (8.8%), helped during the previous open enrollment period. The SLL sets the bar for providing excellent customer service. This year:

- 40% of callers self-routed while in queue for the Medicare hunt group to receive help with Medicare issues.
- The average call length was 24:35 minutes, due to the complex nature of Medicare calls.

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Fit Seniors May Live Longer

Being physically fit after age 60 may extend your life, regardless of your body's fat content, according to a study. Scientists looked at more than 2,600 men and women, age 60 or older, who were involved in a National Institute of Health-funded study of exercise. The seniors walked on a treadmill to rate their fitness levels. Their fat levels were assessed by looking at their waist measurements, percent body fat and their weight to height ratio.



The findings suggest that you don't need to be thin to benefit from regular physical activity. Regular activity like brisk walking for at least 30 minutes most days of the week will keep most older adults out of the lowest fitness category and possibly help prolong their lives. A key to healthy aging is being physically active, regardless of your weight.

MNRAAA offers Matter of Balance classes to help you stay fit and prevent a fall. For more information feel free to contact Gail at 507-389-8869 or ggwaldner@rndc.org. ■

50th Anniversary

In honor of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act (OAA), the Administration for Community Living has announced "Get into the Act" as its theme for Older Americans Month in May 2015. Signed into law in 1965, the OAA established the nationwide aging services network. For more information, visit:



Administration on Aging

http://www.aoa.gov/AoA_programs/OAA/. ■

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- Callers averaged a 1:47 minutes hold time, as they waited for a specialist to help them with their Medicare questions. Good work all!

Return to Community (RTC)

RTC continues to expand and change, providing help to consumers statewide. In 2014, the number of SLL Specialists dedicated to providing in-person assistance to private pay nursing home residents TRIPLED. We now have 23 SLL community living specialists working across the state to help assist people move home. The service was expanded and changed to assist consumers who have been in the nursing home for 45 days (down from 60). We are also offering in-person assistance to consumers who are thinking about moving to a housing with services setting.

Since it began in April 2010, SLL community living specialists have helped more than 1,834 individuals return to the community from a nursing facility – 761 of those in 2014 alone, which is up 71% from 2013.

Feedback from Consumers

Survey responses indicate what people have to say about the help provided via SLL:

- It is so reassuring to know I have someone to call when I need help. Thank you!
- Great services. Glad it's available.
- This kind man was so helpful - even placed a conference call to answer a question he couldn't.
- This is one of the most knowledgeable, polite human services I've dealt with. I really learned a lot about my choices.
- The representative was very helpful and walked me through my options on medicare.gov.
- She was very helpful and understanding.
- This place is fantastic!
- I had called a few times in the last few months and all were helpful and courteous.
- I would highly recommend other aging friends to call the Sr. LinkAge Line for friendly assistance.
- Navigator helped me get accepted to Minnesota Care, saving me \$370 a month in premiums.
- We are lucky to have such nice people at Senior Linkage

What's coming?

As you know, the MBA is developing a home and community-based services finder (report card). This important online tool will help consumers compare and make choices (like a shopping guide) about their community service options. It will include information about the quality of and the services available.

MBA conducted 14 road shows throughout

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Minnesota to gather feedback and find out which services and quality measures are most important to future users and to service providers. This feedback is being incorporated into the Services Finder, as well as a redesigned Minnesotahelp.info, both of which will launch in July 2015.

Great SLL Supporter Steps Down

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention how grateful we all are for the contributions and support of now former Lt. Governor Yvonne Prettner Solon. Throughout her career she has been a leader and advocate for the needs of older Minnesotans. During her tenure as Lt. Governor, she was a wonderful leader and true advocate for the SLL and the MBA. Through her advocacy, together we helped older Minnesotans enjoy more meaningful lives and stay firmly rooted in our communities. That was her passion and we will miss her leadership. Many thanks to the former Lt. Governor for her support!



Lt. Governor
Yvonne Prettner Solon

Another Impressive Year for the State of Minnesota's Senior LinkAge Line®! ■

By, Krista Boston, J.D., Director, Consumer Assistance Programs, Minnesota Board on Aging

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Return Service Request

Your Opinion Matters!

Please share your feedback with us. If you would like to read about specific topics in future **MnRAAA** News or to request **MnRAAA** News by email, contact us at: erica@rmdc.org or 507.389.8879



*With 11 months remaining until MNRAAA officially transitions to an employer of staff...
our Board members may be starting to feel like this!*

Thanks for your dedication MNRAAA Board. Your time and talents are appreciated.

O u r B o a r d

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