

MINRAAAA news

The gateway to resources for older adults, caregivers and service providers in the twenty-seven counties of southwest Minnesota.



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MNRAAA

Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MNRAAA)

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MNRAAA Board Chair
Robert Roesler, *Sherburn*

MNRAAA Board Vice-Chair
Rose Schlieman, *Holloway*

MNRAAA Board Treasurer
Jason Swanson, *Walnut Grove*

MNRAAA Board Secretary
Lisa Lange, *Sherburn*

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Amy Wilde, *Dassel*

MNRAAA Executive Director
Linda Giersdorf



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2016 - A Very Good Year for MNRAAA

Linda Giersdorf, Executive Director



It's been one year since MNRAAA became a true stand-alone agency. We settled into our new office locations in Mankato and Slayton, we implemented the use of our new logo, redesigned our website, held monthly all-staff meetings through the use of technology, expanded our board membership, expanded our programming and staffing, developed new partnerships, and successfully completed many "firsts" – all while continuing to focus on our mission.

These accomplishments were possible because of our dedicated Board of Directors and staff. We look forward to 2017 as we continue to serve as the gateway to resources for older adults, caregivers and service providers in the twenty-seven counties of southwest Minnesota.

From MNRAAA board members and staff – Happy New Year!

- Linda

The MNRAAA offices will be closed on February 20 for an all-staff retreat.



Robert Roesler, *Board Chair*



Rose Schlieman, *Vice-Chair*



Jason Swanson, *Treasurer*



Lisa Lange, *Secretary*

MNRAAA Board Elects Officers

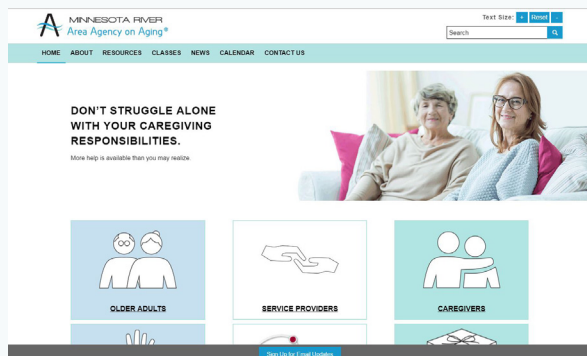
The Board of Directors met in Redwood Falls for their Annual Meeting on December 14, 2016. During this meeting the following members were elected to serve as officers during 2017:

- Robert Roesler – Chair
- Rose Schlieman – Vice-chair
- Jason Swanson – Treasurer
- Lisa Lange – Secretary

In addition, appointments were made to the following committees: Finance, Audit, Nominating and Governance and Planning.

MNRAAA Launches New Website

www.MNRAAA.org



We've updated our website with a new look and updated information.

We've added:

- New blog
- New calendar
- More resources
- And so much more!

Older Americans Month 2017



The Administration on Aging, part of the Administration for Community Living, announced the theme for Older American's Month 2017. The theme, Age Out Loud, is intended to give aging a new voice—one that reflects what today's older adults have to say about aging.

The 2017 theme provides an opportunity to shine a light on many important issues and trends. More than ever before, older Americans are working longer, trying new things, and engaging in their communities. They're taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence, and advocating for themselves and others. They expect to continue to live their lives to the fullest, and they're insisting on changes that make that possible. What it means to age has changed, and Older Americans Month 2017 is a perfect opportunity to recognize and celebrate what getting older looks like today.

In May, the Administration on Aging and the Administration for Community Living will amplify the many voices of older Americans and raise awareness of vital aging issues across the country.

Stay tuned for more information!



Volunteers Help Make Medicare Open Enrollment Successful

Sarah Reiman, LSW, Volunteer Coordinator



Another successful Medicare Open Enrollment Period (October 15 – December 7) has ended. Thanks to the hard work and numerous hours donated by our Senior LinkAge Line® volunteers, approximately 60 volunteer-staffed enrollment events were held in southwest Minnesota. Because of these events, hundreds of people were provided in-person assistance with researching their Medicare plan options for 2017.

The assistance provided by our volunteers is often times life changing. This year at one of our open enrollment sites, a volunteer met with two different people over the age of 80 to review Medicare Part D plan options. Within two hours he had assisted both people in saving an average of \$10,000 each on their medication costs for 2017. According to the volunteer, this was done, "...*simply by enrolling them in a plan that fit their long lists of drugs.*" Another volunteer reported she was able to assist someone with enrolling in a new plan that would

save them \$18,000 next year.

Sometimes our success stories are profound and other times they are subtle. People often come to us feeling very stressed at the thought of having to deal with Medicare. At times, they simply need someone to provide them with simple explanations and reassurance. One volunteer worked with just such an individual. He had high medication costs and was working with his county Veteran Service Officer to apply for help through the Veterans Administration (VA). The volunteer provided him with encouragement to keep pursuing his eligibility for VA drug coverage and talked him through his other potential options. A couple of weeks after meeting with him, the beneficiary called to thank the volunteer for her assistance and reported that he is now able to get all his medications through the VA.

It's stories like these that help keep our volunteers motivated and willing to dedicate extra hours each fall providing much needed assistance

to Medicare beneficiaries in their communities. We are grateful to each and every one of them!

If you are interested in becoming a Volunteer, contact Sarah Reiman at 1-800-333-2433 ext. 82026 or sreiman@mnraaa.org.

Open Enrollment Stories

An 87-year old woman was seen at a Medicare Open Enrollment site. She had never reviewed her Part D plan, since initially enrolling in Part D (in 2006). She was only taking two inexpensive generic medications, but was enrolled in an expensive Medicare Part D plan. She was assisted in making a plan change for 2017 that will result in a savings of nearly \$1,000 this year. She was so grateful that she had heard about the Senior LinkAge Line®.

One of our volunteers assisted a consumer in reviewing her Medicare Part D plan options for 2017. The consumer had indicated that she was paying over \$200 per month for one of her medications. The volunteer questioned the cost, since none of the plans for 2017 had a co-pay that high. After further review and making contact with the pharmacy it was discovered the pharmacy was not billing her Medicare Part D insurance for the medication. The volunteer worked with staff from the Client Service Center and the claim was submitted. They then assisted the consumer in getting a full refund of over \$800, rather than "store credit".



Seasonal Employment with the Senior LinkAge Line®

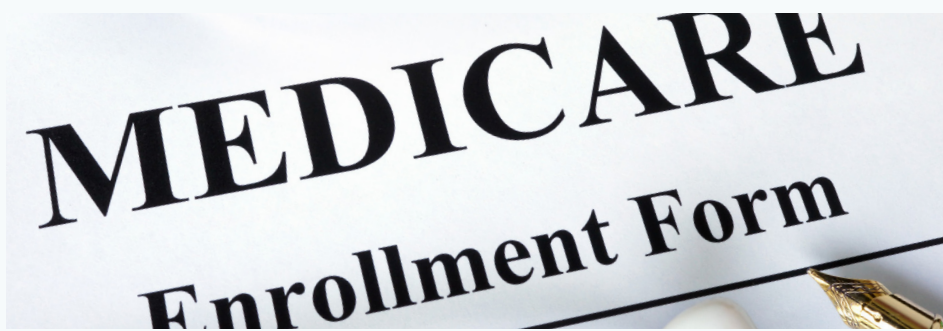
Robin Thompson, Information & Assistance Director

Each year, the Senior LinkAge Line® is instrumental in helping to provide comprehensive non-biased counseling to Medicare beneficiaries. This is particularly important each year during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period (October 15 – December 7). As you can imagine the call volume significantly increases during the Open Enrollment Period. In order to maintain our ability to serve as many people as possible, the Senior LinkAge Line® contact centers hire seasonal employees to help increase their capacity.

This fall, MNRAAA hired four part-time temporary seasonal employees. Roger Elmquist, Wayne Johansen and Donna Appel were hired to provide assistance in our Mankato office and Helen Brink was hired to provide assistance in our Slayton office. Two of our seasonal staff were returning for their fifth year and one for their second year. All of our seasonal staff are retired professionals who act as Senior LinkAge Line® volunteers during the remainder of the year. Each year they receive extensive training on both Medicare and Medical Assistance,

the internet tools necessary for documentation, and the protocols for answering calls through the Senior LinkAge Line® system. They started answering calls this year on October 1 and concluded their service December 23.

The addition of the seasonal staff across the state has been successful in being able to handle the increased call volume, in addition to helping decrease the call wait time for consumers. We plan to continue with this practice next year and hope to add one to two additional seasonal employees. If you or someone you know would be interested in learning more about these seasonal positions, contact Robin Thompson at 1-800-333-2433 ext. 82016.



Will You be New to Medicare?

Attend a Free Class to Help You Understand Your Options

There are important decisions that need to be made when you become eligible for Medicare. Making the wrong decision can lead to inadequate coverage and financial penalties. The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging® (MNRAAA) is sponsoring monthly two-part educational sessions for people who are becoming eligible for Medicare. Sessions are intended for people who will be

turning age 65 in the near future or are becoming eligible for Medicare because they have been receiving Social Security disability benefits.

This past March, MNRAAA began offering monthly two-part classes in Mankato to help individuals learn about Medicare and ways to search their coverage options. In 2017, classes will also be offered in Slayton and in Montevideo. The first session provides attendees

with an overview of Medicare and their coverage options. During the second session, attendees learn how to research their options using non-biased tools, such as the Medicare website.

To find out more information and register for a class, call the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433.

The Senior LinkAge Line® is a free statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging and Area Agencies on Aging. The Senior LinkAge Line® is the federally-designated State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for Minnesota and is the place to call for Medicare and health insurance issues. Call 1-800-333-2433 for assistance or go to www.MinnesotaHelp.info® to chat live with a Senior LinkAge Line® specialist.



we're HIRING!

We're Hiring!

Senior LinkAge Line® Administrative Case Aide

Full-time position

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (MNRAAA) is seeking a full-time Senior LinkAge Line® Administrative Case Aide in our Slayton office. This position will provide administrative assistance and case aide support for the Senior LinkAge Line®. Ideal candidate will have experience with various administrative tasks and data entry. Successful candidate must possess excellent organizational skills, the ability to work independently and in a group, exceptional attention to detail, expertise using Microsoft Office products and the ability to multi-task.

A two-year Associate degree in office management or related field is preferred. If you have six-months or more experience in related administrative support role and meet these qualifications, visit www.mnraaa.org to download an application. Preference will be given to complete application packets received by February 24. Résumés will not be accepted without a cover letter and completed application.

MNRAAA is an EOE/ADA Employer.

Mail completed application, cover letter and resume to:

MNRAAA
Attn: Erica
201 N Broad Street, Suite 102
Mankato MN 56001

New Regional Ombudsman for Long-Term Care

Dave Christianson has been selected as the new Regional Ombudsman for Long-Term Care for the Mankato area.

Dave grew up in the small town of Halsted in Northwestern MN. His family had a small farm growing potatoes and wheat. Dave and his wife Dana live in Fairmont. They have two children, Shannon, 23 years old, and Alexis, 20 years old.

Prior to working at the Ombudsman office, he worked for a small county as a case manager for many years and as a director of Human Services for a short stint. He was part owner of a few group homes in the Metro area specializing in dual diagnosed individuals.

Dave attended three colleges, University of North Dakota, St. Cloud State and graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN.

Welcome to your new position Dave!

Live Well at Home Grant Opportunity

Application Deadline is February 24, 2017

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has published their 2017 Request for Proposal (RFP) soliciting applicants for the Live Well at Home grant program to develop and/or provide services for older Minnesotans to live in the community.

The RFP can be found in the State Register or on the DHS website at http://www.mn.gov/dhs/assets/Live-Well-at-Home-Grant-RFP-FY-2018_tcm1053-269733.pdf

Technical Assistance Available!

The MNRAAA ElderCare Development Partnership (EDP) is available to provide technical assistance to applicants. Applicants can request technical assistance from MNRAAA on a first-come, first-serve basis. Consultation will focus on project need and design, outcomes, sustainability, and budget, as well as review of draft proposals as time permits. Due to staffing constraints, applicants are strongly

encouraged to contact MNRAAA as early as possible to receive technical assistance.

Technical Assistance Contact:

Visit our website at www.mnraaa.org or contact our Administrative Office for information.

Kelly Wolle
Administrative & Communications Assistant
kwolle@mnraaa.org
507.387.1256 x102



Healthy Living as You Age

Kim Madsen, Program Development Coordinator



The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging® (MNRAAA) joins Minnesota's Area Agencies on Aging (m4a) in leading a transformative effort to improve community health.

The Healthy Living as You Age (HLAYA) initiative builds a network of evidence-based programs to help people manage chronic conditions, prevent falls and more.

The initiative leverages the m4as' strong foundation of knowledge and experience with evidence-based health promotion programs. New partnerships with health care and community-based organizations will broaden the statewide reach and impact.

Approximately 35 percent of insured Minnesotans have at least one chronic condition and a large percentage have two or more. The cost of treating chronic diseases in Minnesota is estimated at \$5 billion annually, about 83 percent of total medical and drug spending. In addition, falling is a major threat to well-being, especially for older adults. One in five falls results in serious injury. Minnesota ranks

fourth in the nation in fall-related deaths among people age 65+.

Healthy Living programs help people take an active role in their health and well-being. Participants experience improved health and quality of life and, at the same time, reduce the need for costly medical interventions.

The HLAYA initiative:

- Increases the number, variety and location of evidence-based health promotion programs offered across the state of Minnesota.
- Engages health care providers and insurers in sharing in the cost of the programs to make them affordable to participants of all ages.
- Creates an easy-to-use, online listing of all available Healthy Living classes by type, date and location.

Evidence-Based Programs are:

- Developed by research universities/institutes
- Proven effective through scientific studies
- Supported by tested and proven training

Curricula:

- Are divided into the following categories
 - Falls Prevention
 - Chronic Disease Self-Management
 - Diabetes Prevention and Self-Management

Interest in HLAYA has increased and many more discussions will occur with health systems and other organizations in the early months of 2017.

MNRAAA will host 2 Regional Summits in April, one in Mankato and the second in Marshall, where current partners, future partners and other organizations that support HLAYA will come together to review the progress of the initiative in our service area and strategize on its continued growth.

MNRAAA has sent staff to training in order to have Master Trainers available to train leaders needed for workshops. Training calendars have been developed for 2017, and classes will be held in various communities throughout MNRAAA.

Upon review of the Hospitals and County Public Health Nurse Community Health Needs Surveys and work plans, it is evident that the evidence-based programs offered through this initiative are a crucial piece in the community wellness puzzle.

Program selection varies by region.

Visit our website at www.mnraaa.org or contact our Administrative Office for information.

Kelly Wolle
Administrative & Communications Assistant
kwolle@mnraaa.org
507.387.1256 x102



Becca Shanafelt

Administrative Assistant Intern

Becca joined MNRAAA in November 2016 as an Administrative Assistant Intern. She is a part-time Aging Studies grad student at MSU Mankato and worked as a Life Enrichment Assistant at Old Main Village.

Becca and her husband Todd live in Mankato with their four children ages of 9 to 14 and their Malamute/Husky mix dog. Becca enjoys reading, running, cross-country skiing, gardening and nature. She also enjoys volunteering with her church in many different roles.



Carmen Norstedt, LSW

Community Living Specialist

Carmen Norstedt joined MNRAAA in January as a Community Living Specialist. She is a licensed social worker with experience gained from working as Director of Social Services and Activities at a nursing home.

Carmen and her husband, David, have three boys (Tyler is 22, Aaron is 13 and Gavin is 11). They love the great outdoors, riding four wheelers, snowmobiling and biking. Carmen and her family live outside of Sibley State Park in New London, surrounded with park land. They love to use the trails whenever they can.



Whitney O'Day

Intern

Whitney will be interning at MNRAAA over the spring semester. She is an undergraduate in the Social Work program at Minnesota State University Mankato and hopes to work in the field of aging.

Whitney is originally from Belle Plaine, but is currently living in Mankato to complete her Bachelor's Degree. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends, as well as volunteering whenever possible to learn more about the community.



Baby News

New Arrivals

Two MNRAAA staff recently welcomed new additions to their family.

Danae Forstner (left) and her husband Jeff welcomed their son, Axel Jeffrey on December 5, 2016. Little Axel weighed 6 pounds and was 19 inches long.

Brianna Schmidt (right) and her partner John Wilhelm welcomed their son Daxton Scott to their family on November 11, 2016. Baby Daxton weighed 6 pounds, 3 ounces and was 21 inches long.

Congratulations to Danae, Brianna and their families!



2016 Grant and Contract Awards

Supportive Services (Title III-B)		\$306,079
Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services <i>Legal Advocacy for Older American Project</i>	27 Counties of MNRAA	
Central Community Transit <i>CCT Senior Transportation Program</i>	Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville	
VINE Faith in Action <i>VINE's Helping Hands Outreach to Elders from Diverse Cultures</i>	Blue Earth, Le Seuer, Nicollet	
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota <i>A.C.E. Telephone Reassurance & One to One Peer Counseling</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood	
Interfaith Caregivers - FIA in Faribault County <i>Homemaker/Chore Program</i>	Faribault	
Yellow Medicine East Community Education <i>Granite Falls Intergenerational Chore Service</i>	Chippewa, Yellow Medicine	
VINE Faith in Action <i>Caring Connection</i>	Blue Earth, Le Seuer, Nicollet	
Nutrition Services (Title III-C1 & C2)		\$1,918,531
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota <i>LSS Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Program</i>	Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Martin, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Sibley, Waseca, Watonwan	
Prairie Five CAC, Inc. <i>Prairie Five Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Program</i>	Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine	
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Services (Title III-D)		\$25,088
VINE Faith in Action <i>VINE FIA: Evidence-Based Health Promotion Program</i>	Blue Earth, Brown, Nicollet	
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota <i>A.C.E. Evidence-Based Programs</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock	
National Family Caregiver Support Services (Title III-E)		\$231,309
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota <i>A.C.E. Respite and Counseling</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock	
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota <i>LSS Caregiver Support and Respite Program</i>	Big Stone, Brown, Chippewa, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Sibley, Swift, Yellow Medicine	
Interfaith Caregivers - FIA in Faribault County <i>Caregiver Support and Respite Program</i>	Faribault	
Wellspring Faith in Action <i>Family Caregiver Project</i>	Watonwan	
Consumer Directions, Inc. <i>Title III Self-Directed Services</i>	27 Counties of MNRAA	



2017 Medicare Cost Sharing

SOCIAL SECURITY COST OF LIVING INCREASE 2017

- The Cost of Living Increase (COLA) for 2017 is 0.3%.

MEDICARE PART A HOSPITAL COST SHARING 2017

- Deductible - \$1,316 per benefit period for Days 1-60
 - Coinsurance:
 - \$329 a day for 61st – 90th day each benefit period
 - \$658 a day for 91st – 150th day each benefit period (also known as “Lifetime Reserve Days”)
- Skilled Nursing Facility
 - Coinsurance:
 - \$164.50 a day for 21st – 100th day each benefit period

MEDICARE PART B MEDICAL PREMIUMS 2017

- Standard Monthly Premium - \$134
- The Social Security Act contains a “Hold Harmless” provision that protects Medicare beneficiaries from paying a larger percentage increase in the Medicare Part B premium than they receive in their COLA.
- The premium for Medicare beneficiaries protected from the “Hold Harmless” will vary depending on the person’s Social Security benefit in 2017. For example:
 - If your 0.3% COLA in 2017 amounted to \$3.00 per month, your Medicare Part B premium could increase no more than \$3.00 per month.
- Medicare beneficiaries who are protected by this provision include:
 - 2016 Medicare Part B enrollees (before 1/1/2017) that have their premiums withheld from their SSA check and have incomes below \$85,000 for a single and \$170,000 for a couple.

MEDICARE PART B DEDUCTIBLE 2017

- Annual - \$183

If you have questions about your Medicare coverage or costs associated with Medicare, contact the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433. The Senior LinkAge Line® is a service of the Minnesota Board on Aging and the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc.

MGS 41st Annual Conference - April 28, 2017

The Business of Aging: Exploring Partnerships, Possibilities & Priorities

Earle Brown Heritage Center,
Brooklyn Center, MN

The 2017 Minnesota Gerontological Society (MGS) Annual Conference is dedicated to exploring the business side of aging services. It will explore the private sector, the way businesses approach the aging marketplace, and the impact of older adults as consumers.

Featuring nationally prominent speakers:

Morning Keynote:

“The Longevity Economy”

Jody Holtzman, AARP
Thought Leadership Senior
Vice President

Afternoon Keynote:

“Economics of Aging - Business and Personal”

Chris Farrell, Economics
Editor, Marketplace Money,
American Public Media

For more information, go to

<http://www.mngero.org/conferences-seminars/mgs-41st-annual-conference-april-28-2017-2/>

Open Enrollment Stories

A caregiver contacted a volunteer at one of the MinnesotaHelp Network® sites about her mother. She was concerned that her mother was paying too much for medications. It was discovered that two of her most expensive prescriptions were not on her current Medicare Part D plan’s

formulary. The estimated annual cost in 2017 was \$23,000. Part D plans were compared and the daughter took the plan comparisons to her mother to review. The consumer choose to enroll in a different Part D plan to begin on 1/1/2017 with a savings of \$18,000



Training Calendar

MNRAAA partners with the Minnesota Board on Aging to provide evidence-based programs for older adults in the 27 county service area. These programs are available statewide through our Area Agency on Aging colleagues (mn4a.org).

Below are dates for evidence-based program leader training and other training opportunities from MNRAAA. More detailed descriptions and registrations are available on our website at: <http://mnraaa.org/training-opportunities>.

Date	Program Training	Location
February 15-16, 2017	Powerful Tools for Caregivers	Marshall
March 13-14 & 20-21, 2017	Chronic Disease Self-Management Program	Redwood Falls
April 18-19, 2017	Matter of Balance	Redwood Falls
April 25-26, 2017	Diabetes Self-Management Program	New Ulm
May 4, 2017	Caregiver Coaching	Redwood Falls
June 5-6 & 12-13, 2017	Chronic Disease Self-Management Program	Willmar
July 11-12, 2017	Matter of Balance	Willmar
July 24-25, 2017	Diabetes Self-Management Program	Hutchinson
September 12-13, 2017	Powerful Tools for Caregivers	Hutchinson
September 18-19 & 25-26, 2017	Chronic Disease Self-Management Program	Windom
October 4, 2017	Caregiver Coaching	Willmar
October 23-24, 2017	Matter of Balance	Marshall
November 8, 2017	Live Well at Home/Evidence-Based Training	TBD
November 13-14, 2017	Diabetes Self-Management Program	Worthington

Return to Community Awarded with Bright Idea Designation

The Return to Community initiative in Minnesota was recently selected to receive a Bright Idea designation.

The Bright Idea designation is awarded by Innovations in American Government Awards program, the nation's preeminent program devoted to recognizing and promoting excellence and creativity in the public sector. The program highlights exemplary models of government innovation and advances efforts to address

the nation's most pressing public concerns.

Since its inception in 1985, the program has received over 27,000 applications and recognized nearly 500 government initiatives since it was established in 1985 with funding from the Ford Foundation.

More than 60 programs were recognized from over 500 applications. As a Bright Idea, Return to Community Initiative will

be highlighted on the Ash Center's Government Innovator's Network, and received a seal designating the program as a Bright Idea. All Bright Ideas will also become a part of the Government Innovator's network open collection of innovations.

To learn more, please visit the Government Innovators Network at www.innovations.harvard.edu and the MN Board on Aging website www.mnaging.org/en/News/BrightIdea.aspx.



Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®

201 N. Broad St., Suite 102
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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you would like to read about specific topics in future MNRAAA news or to request MNRAAA news by email, contact us at: kwolle@mnraaa.org or 507.387.1256 x102.

Save the Dates

April 5
MANKATO



April 6
MARSHALL

Healthy Living as You Age Regional Summits

Watch for more details coming soon.