

MINRAAA news





Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MNRAAA)

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National Council on Aging

Slayton Office Update

As we continue to navigate the waters of the COVID-19 Pandemic, MNRAAA, like so many other organizations, continues to operate in a virtual setting.

Last March, we temporarily closed our offices in Mankato and Slayton, pivoting all staff to working from home. MNRAAA continues to provide services for older adults and caregivers during the pandemic.

While all staff continue to work from home, MNRAAA has made the decision to permanently close our Slayton office location. The Mankato office will remain temporarily closed until further notice. With the Slayton office closed, MNRAAA is able to maintain all staff. Staff that worked in the Slayton office will continue to work remotely.

MNRAAA and the Senior LinkAge Line will continue to offer classes and presentations virtually in our twenty-seven counties. Although the MNRAAA sign on the building has been taken down from the Slayton office, it does not mean that our presence is gone. Just the opposite, MNRAAA is working hard to ensure that we represent and assist all of the communities in our service area. Our staff, volunteers, board members, and community partners want to be available to you.

You can continue to reach MNRAAA online at www.MNRAAA.org or on Facebook at facebook.com/MNRAAA.

Thank you all for your continued support of our organization.

Jason W. Swanson



Living Your Best Life – Aging Mastery Program

Are you interested in feeling better today and staying healthy for the future? We are living longer — so it is good to be thinking about ways to engage in ongoing and positive ways to make the most of longevity. The Aging Mastery program is a comprehensive and fun approach to positive aging by focusing on key aspects of health, finances, relationships, personal growth, and community involvement. Central to the Aging Mastery philosophy is the belief that modest lifestyle changes can produce significant results.

Mastery comes from turning these lifestyle changes into habits that lead to improved health, stronger economic security, enhanced well-being, and increased societal participation.

Register for Aging Mastery Programs at yourjuniper.org/

➤ Aging Mastery Program
Starting May 18 – July 6
Tuesdays 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM via Zoom
Contact: Kelly McDonough
kmcdonough@mnraaa.org



Legislative Update

The 85th Minnesota Legislature was called into session on January 5, 2021, and has a lot on their plate, from the continuing pandemic relief, vaccinations, and economic recovery. MNRAAA has been in touch with the legislators serving our 27-county area (17 Representatives and 10 Senators) about the session and our priorities. MNRAAA, like the Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging, has identified four main areas to review with the state legislature: volunteer drivers, Age-Friendly Minnesota, broadband and social isolation.

- Volunteer drivers are the lifeblood in many of our communities. From delivering home-delivered meals, taking individuals to appointments, or delivering groceries, they keep older adults engaged. We ask that Minnesota recognize them and clearly define them as not “for-hire” unlike Uber and Lyft rides.
- Age-Friendly Minnesota

started in December 2019 when Governor Walz signed an Executive Order to create a Governor’s Council. The council met over the past year and has submitted recommendations to the Governor’s Office. We would like to see those recommendations implemented and the State of Minnesota enrolled into the World Health Organization (WHO)/American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.

- The pandemic has shown everyone the tremendous gap in broadband in our area and throughout Minnesota. We need to continue to advocate for the expansion, implementation, and affordability of broadband for older adults and caregivers in Minnesota.
- Social isolation has also taken center stage during these trying times. We need to continue

to find innovative solutions to reach older adults who find themselves cut off from services. Some of these could include telehealth, telephone reassurance programs or friendly visiting. We need to find best practices throughout the state and implement them.

Stay tuned to our website for updates on our legislative priorities. To find out who represents you go to gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts and make your voice heard to improve older adults’ lives.



MNRAAA and the Senior LinkAge Line will be closed on May 31 for Memorial Day.

National Volunteer Week was April 18-24

Across the United States and Washington D.C., Minnesota ranks second for volunteerism, according to an AmeriCorps survey. This data puts the phrase “Minnesota nice” into perspective. It is gratifying and humbling to know that so many Minnesotans have the empathy and passion to offer a helping hand.

As a volunteer coordinator, it is an honor to help serve people living in Southwest Minnesota and to

support volunteers in achieving their missions. “Witnessing volunteer acts of kindness resonates as an affirmation of our ability to be selfless and contribute to the greater good”, states Brittany Johnson, Volunteer Coordinator for Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging. Volunteers often underestimate the power of their touch, a smile, offering a listening ear and other small acts of kindness. In other words, volunteers have the potential to

turn a life around by donating their most valuable asset, time.

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging wants to thank the dedicated volunteers that make an impactful difference within their communities by sharing their wealth of knowledge and compassion. This week, we honor our volunteers and express our gratitude for their commitment to making older adults that live in southwest Minnesota thrive.



Announcing New Board Members

We are pleased to announce two new members to the Board of Directors, Kathleen Preuss and Pam Radunz.

Kathleen Preuss is a member and resident of the Upper Sioux Community Dakota Tribe of Minnesota and a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Tribe of South Dakota. Preuss is currently the Social Service Director at the Upper Sioux Community and has previously worked as a police officer and worked with ClearWay of Minnesota. She has been a volunteer with Hurt No More Children's Program, PATHWAYS Sexual Assault Program and PACT for Families.

When asked about her area of concern relating to older adults, Preuss stated that she wants to ensure "needs are being met in a culturally sensitive manner." Preuss has started an adult language class in hopes of keeping

the Native Dakota language alive.

Pam Radunz is the Resident Services Director at Harmony River Living Center and is a resident of Hutchinson. Radunz holds a Master of Science in Gerontology from Saint Cloud State University, a certified Independent Trainer for Dementia through Positive Approach, and a certified Teepa Snow trainer on Dementia. She has been an integral part of numerous committees, such as, Well Being at Work Wellness, Meeker County Fair Board, Meeker Area Care Connections, and McLeod County Senior Providers.

"I have a passion for older people that I have grown and developed all my life," said Radunz when asked why she was interested in joining MNRAAA.

"MNRAAA is fortunate to have such talented, motivated and caring individuals in our area to



Kathleen Preuss (left) and Pam Radunz (right)

serve on our board. Kat and Pam both bring unique experiences that will assist us in shaping our future efforts around aging," stated Jason W. Swanson, Executive Director.

"As the MNRAAA Board of Directors fills two vacancies due to retirements from the board, we are so very pleased to announce the addition of our two newest members. The MNRAAA board is well positioned to continue to support programs focused on the support of all older adults in Southwestern Minnesota," stated Robert Roesler, Board Chair.

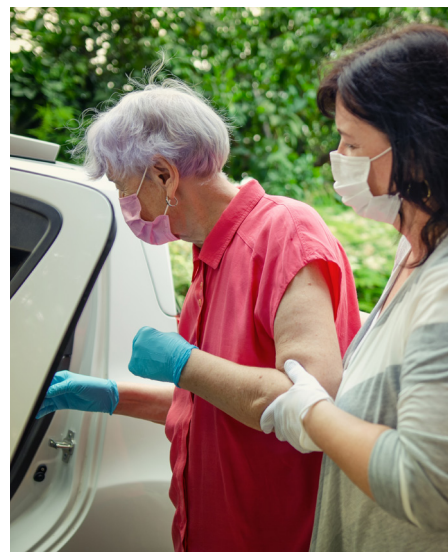
Volunteer Drivers Provide the Gift of Transportation

The majority of our service area is rural, which means transportation to essential services such as grocery stores and medical appointments is vital for older adults. Several transportation providers offer transportation options in southwestern Minnesota, and an essential element that they rely on is volunteer drivers.

Transportation provided by volunteer drivers is "the lowest cost transportation option available for many people," according to the United Community Action Partnership website. "In 2018, volunteer drivers in Minnesota

provided more than 168,000 rides for older adults and other non-drivers, giving them access to healthcare and other essential community services and products. Organizations with volunteer driver programs served 77,474+ people in 2018 and drivers covered more than 9.5 million miles" (volunteerdrivermn.org/about). Given the distance from Iowa to Canada is approximately 435 miles, that means our volunteer drivers drove the length of Minnesota 21,839 times in 2018!

Every time a volunteer offers their time as a volunteer driver, it



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Minnesotans are Missing Out On Thousands of Dollars

Programs are available to help pay the costs of people's Medicare premiums and prescription drug copays. Unfortunately, many people do not think they are eligible, so they do not apply and miss out on thousands of dollars in savings.

Medicare Savings Programs help pay people's Medicare Part B premium. Some people can also get help paying their Medicare deductibles and coinsurance. People can apply by contacting the county human service office where they live, or they can download and complete the Application for Certain Populations.

The Extra Help Program lowers the cost of prescription drugs and can save people up to \$5,000/year. People on the Extra Help Program also have additional Medicare enrollment periods, which allows them to change plans at different times throughout the year. People can apply for the program by calling Social Security or applying online at www.ssa.gov.

To learn if you are eligible or to get help with an application, call the Senior LinkAge Line at 800-333-2433.

The Senior LinkAge Line is a free, statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging and Minnesota's Area Agencies on Aging. The Senior LinkAge Line helps older Minnesotans and caregivers find answers and connect to the services and support they need.



"After paying for my Medicare costs, I had nothing left to do the things I love. Now I am saving thousands of dollars each year."

**Call to see if you are
eligible for help.**

m MINNESOTA
SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

800-333-2433

Volunteer Drivers

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means one of our fellow residents is receiving the ride they need to access an essential service. Volunteer drivers have very flexible schedules and drive where they choose, all while providing the gift of transportation to those who need a simple ride.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver or know of someone who might be, please contact the Program Developer serving your county to receive information on volunteer driver programs in your area. MNRAAA.org/program-development/

- **Betty Christensen**
bchristensen@mnraaa.org:
Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties
- **Kelly McDonough**
kmcdonough@mnraaa.org:
Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan counties
- **Molly Peterson**
mpeterson@mnraaa.org:
Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock counties

MNRAAA Trainings and Presentations

MNRAAA is offering a training opportunities for older adults, caregivers and professionals.

Many of these trainings are free and are held online.

To find upcoming trainings and presentations, visit our website at MNRAAA.org/calendar or our Facebook page at facebook.com/MNRAAA.



2021 Grant and Contract Awards

Supportive Services (Title III-B)		\$403,641
Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services <i>Legal Advocacy for Older American Project</i>	27 Counties of MNRAAA	
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	
Interfaith Caregivers - FIA in Faribault County <i>Homemaker/Chore Program</i>	Faribault	
Generations Home Care Services <i>Generations Homemaker/Assisted Transportation Program</i>	Sibley	
United Community Action Partnership <i>Assisting Seniors on the Go</i>	Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock	
Nutrition Services (Title III-C1 & C2)		\$2,194,148
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)		\$26,000
A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota <i>A.C.E. Evidence-Based Programs</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock	
National Family Caregiver Support Services (Title III-E)		\$347,983
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	
VINE Faith in Action <i>Empowering Caregivers - A comprehensive Program of Education & Support at VINE</i>	Blue Earth, Le Seuer, Nicollet	
Consumer Directions, Inc. <i>Title III Self-Directed Services</i>	27 Counties of MNRAAA	

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is providing financial assistance for COVID-19 related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020.

To be eligible for funeral assistance:

- › The death must have occurred in the United States, including the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.
- › The death certificate must indicate the death was attributed to COVID-19.
- › The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after January 20, 2020.
- › There is no requirement for the deceased person to have been a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien.



FRAUD ALERT

FEMA has received reports of scammers reaching out to people offering to register them for funeral assistance. FEMA has not sent any such notifications and we do not contact people before they register for assistance.

To get more information or to apply for help paying funeral expenses:

- › Call the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Line at 844-684-6333, Monday-Friday 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.
- › Visit [fema.gov](https://www.fema.gov)

Otto Bremer Trust Grant Funds Access to Healthy Aging Programs

MNRAAA received a \$25,000 grant from the Otto Bremer Trust for expanding access to healthy aging programs for older adults in our 27-county service area.

MNRAAA connects rural service providers to health education programs proven to help older adults prevent falls and self-manage chronic health conditions. However, providers often face barriers in providing the classes, like lack of up-front funding to train the people who would teach the programs or to purchase supplies for their first class.

The Otto Bremer Trust grant will fund training and startup expenses for service providers new to offering evidence-based healthy aging programs or current providers wanting to offer new programming. As a result, more providers will be able to offer the programs and more older adults

will be able to participate.

Healthy aging classes that organizations can hold for older adults include but are not limited to: A Matter of Balance, Aging Mastery Program, Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Diabetes Prevention Program, Living Well with Chronic Conditions, Living Well with Chronic Pain, Living Well with Diabetes, Programa de Manejo Personal de la Diabetes, Stay Active and Independent for Life, Stepping On, Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance, Tomando Control de su Salud, and Walk With Ease.

MNRAAA will be targeting Jackson, Le Sueur, Martin, Meeker, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan counties with these dollars. For more information about the funding, visit [MNRAAA.org/grant-opportunities](https://mnraaa.org/grant-opportunities) or contact Krista Eichhorst at keichhorst@mnraaa.org.



About the Otto Bremer Trust

The Otto Bremer Trust (OBT) is a bank holding company and a private charitable trust based in Saint Paul, Minn., that works at the intersection of finance and philanthropy. Created in 1944 by Otto Bremer, it is today one of the nation's largest philanthropic organizations and is committed to supporting a better quality of life for residents of Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. OBT is the majority owner of Bremer Financial Corporation, a regional financial services company and manages a diversified investment portfolio. Since its funding, OBT has invested more than \$841 million in people, places, and opportunities in the Upper Midwest.