

# MNRAAA news





**Minnesota River Area Agency  
on Aging (MNRAAA)**

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## 2022 Legislative Update

MNRAAA targeted a handful of topics to raise awareness around and advocate with area legislators this year. At the beginning of the year, the top priorities were volunteer drivers and social isolation. As the session began and the pandemic continued, funding for senior nutrition started to draw attention. Senior Nutrition programs experienced an increase in older adults during the pandemic. According to Hunger Solutions, older adults' food shelf visits increased by 31.2% from 2019 to 2020. Funding for meals for older adults has stayed mostly flat over the past few decades as the population of older adults has grown exponentially, and food costs have skyrocketed. Organizations that provide home-delivered and group meals are sounding the alarm that they cannot meet the growing nutritional needs of older adults. Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging (m4a) is advocating the State of Minnesota to increase the State's spending from \$2.695 million to \$7.695 million, a \$5 million increase. As I draft this article, we are contacting legislators and the governor's office, asking them not to forget about senior nutrition.



On the Federal side, the Volunteer Driver Coalition ([volunteerdrivermn.org](http://volunteerdrivermn.org)) is working with Representative Pete Stauber to increase the Volunteer Driver Rate. In April, Representative Stauber introduced HF 7432, the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2022. This bill would increase volunteers' federal mileage reimbursement rate from \$0.14 per mile to match the business reimbursement rate of \$0.585 per mile. This would assist community-based organizations in rebuilding their volunteer pool.

We cannot forget or minimize the pandemic's impact on older adults. Social isolation has been around for a while, and the pandemic has highlighted the devastating effects it has on older adults. MNRAAA continues to raise awareness around this issue and looks to find innovative and successful programs to assist in mitigating social isolation.

I encourage you to stay connected with MNRAAA's legislative efforts by following us on our social media platforms.

*Jason W. Swanson*

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging provides advocacy, information, resources and assistance so that older adults can maintain the lifestyle of their choice.





## Employee Recognition Award - Rhonda Hiller Fjeldberg

MNRAAA encourages staff to nominate their colleagues to identify one who encompasses our five core values:

- › Stewardship
- › Leadership
- › Inclusion
- › Integrity
- › Dependability

The Employee Recognition Award was started last year as an outcome of the strategic plan. At the last staff retreat, MNRAAA recognized Rhonda Hiller Fjeldberg, Grant and Contract Manager.

Rhonda is a paragon of integrity in her work as a grant and contract manager for MNRAAA. She provides honest, respectful, and transparent support and communication to MNRAAA's Title III grantees. She is recognized as an expert in her field by her peers at AAA's across the state. Rhonda's attention to detail, careful planning, and exceptional understanding of federal grants management enables MNRAAA to be a good steward of federal resources in our region. She ensures that our agency is above reproach in our responsibilities as a funder. Additionally, Rhonda has demonstrated incredible professionalism and poise in the face of many challenges in the grants management realm over the past year. Beyond that, she is a wonderful mentor and teacher.

Rhonda has been with MNRAAA for thirty-two years. When she



*Rhonda Hiller Fjeldberg (left) and Jason W. Swanson (right)*

is not working, she and her husband, Phil, can be found camping at one of the numerous state parks in Minnesota. While camping, she loves entertaining visitors, especially her grandchildren. When forced

indoors, she enjoys movies or a good book.

Congratulations Rhonda! We appreciate all your hard work and dedication to assisting older adults to thrive!



*Read more about the MNRAAA Spring Board and Staff Retreat held at the Lower Sioux Indian Community on pages 6 & 7.*



## New Staff



**Emily Ebel**

**Information & Assistance Specialist**

Emily joined MNRAAA in March 2021 as a remote staff Information & Assistance Specialist. She lives in Hanley Falls with her husband, Colton and their daughter.

Prior to joining MNRAAA, Emily was an activities coordinator at a long-term care facility and a senior housing manager at a independent living facility.



**Brandi Ostgaard**

**Community Living Specialist**

Brandi joined MNRAAA in January 2022 as a remote staff Community Living Specialist. She lives in Tracy with her husband. Brandi enjoys kayaking, snowboarding, cooking and podcasts.

Before joining MNRAAA, Brandi was a long-term care nurse.



**Britney Fletcher**

**Information & Assistance Specialist**

Britney joined MNRAAA in March 2022 as an Information & Assistance Specialist in the Mankato office. She lives in Mankato with her husband, Chris and their daughter, Priscilla.

Before joining MNRAAA, Britney worked as a nursing home social worker.



**Rebecca Hayden**

**Information & Assistance Specialist**

Rebecca joined MNRAAA in January 2022 as an Information & Assistance Specialist in the Mankato office. She lives in North Mankato with her husband, Todd and their two children. Rebecca loves to read, cook and spend time outdoors with her family hiking, biking or camping.

Before joining MNRAAA, Rebecca work as a community engagement and wellness specialist. She worked with older adults, teaching exercise classes and promoting health living.



**Annie Budach**

**Community Living Specialist**

Annie joined MNRAAA in March 2022 as a Community Living Specialist in the Mankato office. She lives in Saint Peter with her husband Kyle. Annie enjoys cooking, baking, shopping, reading, lake time, spending time with friends and family, and going on trips to new places.

Since graduating from the University of North Dakota, Annie has worked as a licensed social worker in long-term care.



**Kim Maas**

**Information & Assistance Specialist**

Kim joined MNRAAA in March 2022 as an Information & Assistance Specialist in the Mankato office. She lives in Waseca and enjoys riding, driving, raising, and training Quarter Horses and Paints.

Before joining MNRAAA, Kim worked as an administrative assistant and family self-sufficiency coordinator. She is also an adjunct professor and teaches undergraduate courses in sociology and social work.





## Announcing New Board Members



**Macy Golberg**

### **Return to Community Case Aide**

Macy joined MNRAAA in March 2022 as a remote staff Return to Community Case Aide. She lives in Cottonwood with her husband, Derek and their three sons, Waylon, Walker, and Wyatt.

Prior to joining MNRAAA, Macy worked with an insurance company and as a employment specialist for mental health.



*Sheila Westfield (left), Stacy Hammer (center) and Khou Lor (right)*

MNRAAA is pleased to announce three new members to the Board of Directors, Sheila Westfield, Stacy Hammer, and Khou Lor.

Sheila Westfield of Trosky currently works as the Director of Nursing and Clinical Services at Sanford-Luverne Medical Center. Westfield is active in her community as she has served as Scoutmaster for Troop 220 Pipestone Boy Scouts of America and coordinates or leads church music. A graduate of South Dakota State University, Westfield stated that her interest in joining the board is twofold: raise awareness of services available in the area and assist in filling gaps in services in the Pipestone, Rock County areas, specifically transportation and mental health.

Stacy Hammer of Redwood Falls is currently employed with the Lower Sioux Indian Community and serves as the Director of Community Health. She has been taking the lead in guiding the community through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hammer is also the Title VI Director and a Registered Dietitian. The Minnesota State University Mankato graduate has been awarded the 2019 Indian Health Services Area Directors Outstanding Tribal Health Employee Award and has been featured in the magazine Circle in an article called "Lower Sioux Healthy Meals – a model."

Khou Lor of Tracy is the Rural Equity Specialist with the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF). Within her community, Lor is a board member of the Tracy Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and a member of the Tracy Area Foundation. She has also been involved with the Southwest Hmong Community.

The MNRAAA Board of Directors are professionals from MNRAAA's twenty-seven-county area, ranging from a retired hospital administrator to a registered nurse, is a volunteer governing board. For more to apply as a board member, please visit our website at [mnraaa.org](http://mnraaa.org).

## MNRAAA Trainings and Presentations

MNRAAA is offering training opportunities for older adults, caregivers and professionals. Many of these trainings are free and are held online.

To find upcoming trainings and presentations, go to our Facebook page at [facebook.com/MNRAAA](https://facebook.com/MNRAAA) and click "Sign Up" to receive our emails.

Scan with your phone to visit MNRAAA's Eventbrite site.





## MNRAAA Spring Staff and Board Retreat

MNRAAA board and staff members hold a recent MNRAAA spring retreat at the Lower Sioux Indian Community. The event was held at the newly opened Intergenerational Cultural Incubator. The Lower Sioux Indian Community received a Live Well at Home Grant in 2019 for elders' well-being by bringing them together in a new gathering place.

The retreat started with a welcome by Executive Director Jason W. Swanson. MNRAAA Program Developers Betty Christensen and Kelly McDonough provided training on becoming a dementia-friendly workplace. After a break, each department broke into small work groups.

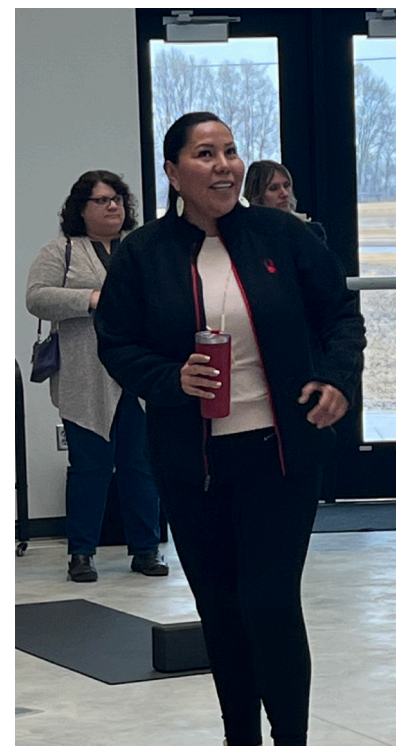
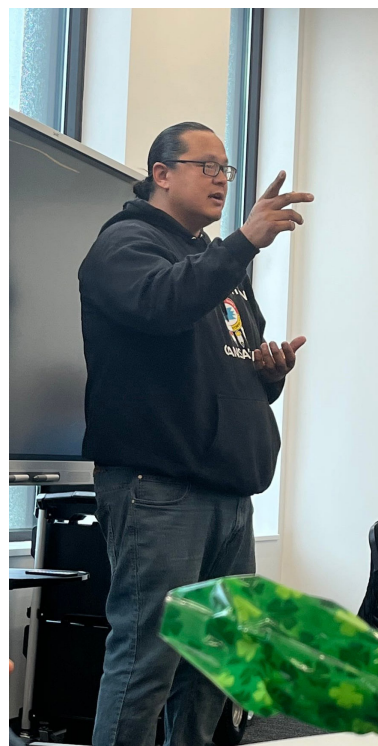
After lunch in the elder dining

space, Stacy Hammer, RDN, LD, MNRAAA board member, and the Director of Community Health at the Lower Sioux Indian Community gave an overview of Cansayapi. Mat Pendleton, director of the Recreation Center, spoke about the education and training he received around quill working and the importance of learning from elders. Grace Goldtooth presented the different activities that will be taking place in the Intergenerational Cultural Incubator for all ages. One of the day's final events was a tour of the classrooms, art studios, kitchens and other gathering spaces in the Intergenerational Cultural Incubator.

After the retreat, some MNRAAA board and staff members visited

the new food pantry. The food pantry was recently completed and opened to the public. For more information about the pantry, visit their website at [lowersiouxhhs.org/cansayapi-food-pantry](https://lowersiouxhhs.org/cansayapi-food-pantry) or contact Emily at 507-430-5746.

Although the weather was cold and wet, the hospitality was warm and inviting. MNRAAA Executive Director Jason W. Swanson was able to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the Clinic from Stacy Hammer and a conversed with Dr. Darin Prescott, the Lower Sioux Indian Clinic CEO. MNRAAA is currently working with the Lower Sioux Indian Community on another project. Stay tuned to hear more about this endeavor soon!











## Kickstarting Healthy Aging Classes with Otto Bremer Trust

by Krista Eichhorst

Healthy aging classes offer many benefits to older adults, such as preventing falls, increasing fitness levels, or better managing ongoing health conditions. But getting trained to offer these programs can be cost-prohibitive for nonprofit organizations that want to provide them, especially small, rural organizations. To remove this financial barrier and increase access to healthy aging classes for older adults in the 27 counties of southwest Minnesota, the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MNRAAA) applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the Otto Bremer Trust.

The grant is designed to cover training expenses and \$750 in startup funding to new providers of healthy aging programs or existing providers that want to expand to offer new healthy aging programs. Providers

can use these mini-grants to purchase program supplies, cover staff time, promote classes, or other expenses for holding their first class.

MNRAAA has funded new healthy aging programming through the mini-grants for seven nonprofits that serve Chippewa, Blue Earth, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Nicollet, Swift, and Watonwan counties. These nonprofits have trained 13 people to lead the following healthy aging programs: Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Living Well with Chronic Conditions, Living Well with Diabetes, A Matter of Balance, Stay Active and Independent for Life, Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance, and Walk With Ease. To date, five of the nonprofits have completed their first classes, which have served a total of 60 older adults.

Additionally, through this funding, MNRAAA hosted a



free virtual Living Well with Chronic Conditions leader training in fall 2021 for providers in our region and trained ten new class leaders from A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota, Carris Health, and Sanford Health. In May, MNRAAA will host another free virtual leader training for providers in southwest Minnesota, in Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance.

By the time the grant ends in August, MNRAAA will have strengthened the capacity of nonprofits across our service area to provide healthy aging classes that keep older adults active, connected, and thriving – even during a global pandemic. We are grateful to the Otto Bremer Trust for their generosity and flexibility in funding this important work.



MNRAAA and the Senior LinkAge Line will be closed on the following dates.

**MEMORIAL DAY**  
May 30







## 2022 Grant and Contract Awards

<b>Supportive Services (Title III-B)</b>	
<b>Brookside Senior Living</b> <i>Let's Talk (with Allen) for counseling</i>	Chippewa County
<b>Central Community Transit</b> <i>CCT Senior Transportation Program for Transportation and Assisted Transportation</i>	Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville Counties
<b>City of Tyler</b> <i>Tyler Senior Snow Removal for Chore</i>	Lincoln County
<b>City of Worthington/Center for Active Living</b> <i>Health Promotion – Non-Evidence Based Project for Education/ Training and Health Promotion – Non-Evidence Based</i>	Nobles County
<b>Essential Senior Services</b> <i>Essential Senior Services Chore and Homemaker for Homemaker and Chore</i>	Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock Counties
<b>Generations Home Care Services</b> <i>Generations Homemaker/Assisted Transportation Program for Homemaker and Assisted Transportation</i>	McLeod, Sibley, Renville Counties
<b>Granite Falls Living at Home/Block Nurse Program</b> <i>Connections for Better Living for Telephone Reassurance, Visiting, Outreach and Health Promotion – Non-Evidence Based</i>	Chippewa, Yellow Medicine Counties
<b>Interfaith Caregivers - Faith In Action in Faribault County</b> <i>Homemaker/Chore Program</i>	Faribault County
<b>Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota</b> <i>LSS Older Adults Supportive Services Program for Counseling, Telephone Reassurance and Visiting</i>	Big Stone, Brown, Chippewa, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Sibley, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties
<b>Prairie Five Community Action Partnership, Inc.</b> <i>Connections on the Prairie for Education/Training and Outreach</i>	Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties
<b>Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services</b> <i>Legal Advocacy for Older Persons for Legal Assistance and Legal Education</i>	27 Counties of MNRAAA
<b>United Community Action Partnership</b> <i>Assisting Seniors on the Go for Assisted Transportation</i>	Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock Counties
<b>VINE Faith in Action</b> <i>VINE's Helping Hands Outreach to Elders from Diverse Cultures for Special Access</i>	Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet Counties
<b>Waseca Area Caregiver Services</b> <i>Caring Hands for Homemaker, Chore, Education/Training and Visiting</i>	Waseca County
<b>Nutrition Services (Title III-C1 &amp; C2)</b>	
<b>Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota</b> <i>LSS Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Programs</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 Counties
<b>Prairie Five Community Action Partnership, Inc.</b> <i>Prairie Five Congregate and Home Delivered Meals Programs</i>	Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties



2022 Grant and Contract Awards continued from page 9

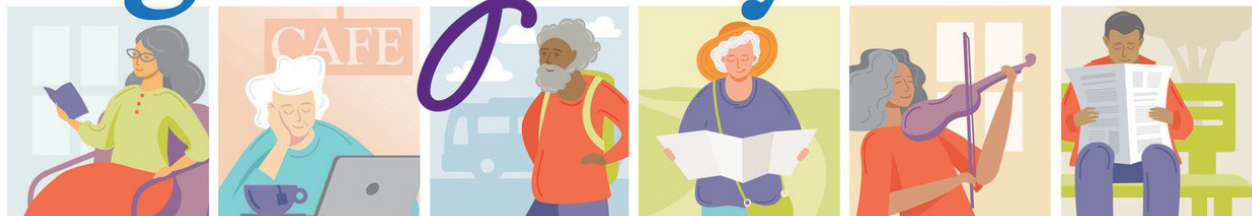
**Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Services (Title III-D)**

<b>A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota</b> <i>A.C.E. Evidence-Based Programs for Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock Counties
<b>Adult Community Center</b> <i>Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs</i>	Lyon County
<b>City of Eden Valley</b> <i>Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs</i>	Meeker County
<b>VINE Faith in Action</b> <i>Finding a Healthy Way through VINE's Evidence-Based Programming for Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs</i>	Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet Counties
<b>Waseca Area Caregiver Services</b> <i>Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs</i>	Waseca County

**National Family Caregiver Support Services (Title III-E)**

<b>A.C.E. of Southwest Minnesota</b> <i>A.C.E. Caregiver Support Services for Respite-In Home, Counseling, Support Groups and Training</i>	Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Redwood, Rock Counties
<b>Interfaith Caregivers - Faith In Action in Faribault County</b> <i>Caregiver Support and Respite Program for Counseling, Support Groups and Respite-In Home</i>	Faribault County
<b>Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota</b> <i>LSS Caregiver Support and Respite for Respite-In Home, Respite-Out of Home Day, Counseling, Support Groups and Training</i>	Big Stone, Brown, Chippewa, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Sibley, Swift, Yellow Medicine Counties
<b>VINE Faith in Action</b> <i>Empowering Caregivers for Counseling, Support Groups and Training</i>	Blue Earth, Le Seuer, Nicollet Counties
<b>Waseca Area Caregiver Services</b> <i>Caring Hands for Caregivers for Counseling, Support Groups, Respite-In Home; and Respite-Out of Home Day</i>	Waseca County
<b>Wellspring Faith in Action</b> <i>Family Caregiver Project for Support Groups, Training and Respite-In Home</i>	Watsonwan County

# Age my way!


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MAY 2022





## Diabetes Prevention: A “Weighty” Idea

by Kelly Snell

Benjamin Franklin once said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure...” and Medicare has adopted this “weighty” idea. Medicare covers preventative services at 100% to prevent and/or detect diseases early when they are most easily treated. Diabetes is one such disease.

According to the American Diabetes Association, in 2020, approximately 358,000 Minnesotans were diagnosed with diabetes, and an additional 118,000 people had diabetes but did not know it. Additionally, an estimated 1,441,000 people are living with a pre-diabetic condition in Minnesota.

Early detection through diabetes screening allows you to make lifestyle adjustments early in the hopes of improving your overall quality and longevity of life. Medicare Part B covers blood glucose screening up to two times per year if you are at risk of developing diabetes. An at-risk individual is anyone with high blood pressure, a history of high blood sugar, a history of abnormal cholesterol levels, or whose body mass index (BMI) indicates they are obese. Medicare also covers screenings when two or more of the following apply:

- 65 or older
- Family history of diabetes
- History of gestational diabetes (diabetes during

pregnancy

- BMI indicates you are overweight

People on Medicare are encouraged to take advantage of the free Welcome to Medicare preventative visit and subsequent annual wellness visits. With the help of your doctor and Medicare’s preventative services, you can take control of your health, one “ounce of prevention” at a time.

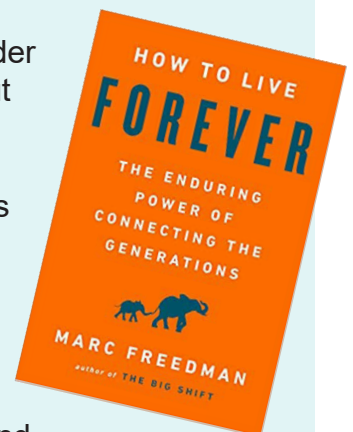
The Senior LinkAge Line® (800-333-2433) is a free, statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging in partnership with Minnesota’s Area Agencies on Aging. The Senior LinkAge Line is Minnesota’s federally designated State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the place to call for questions and information on Medicare and much more.

### *How to Live Forever; The Enduring Power of Connecting the Generations*

by Marc Freedman, reviewed by Becca Shanafelt

Marc Freedman, social innovator and founder of Encore.org, wanted to write a book about his work’s underlying passion, bringing the generations together. In his book, *How to Live Forever*, Freedman reveals that today’s society is the most age-segregated it has ever been in history and explains how we got here. He points out the challenges that both youth and elders are experiencing and shows how bringing these two age groups back together can benefit society and the individual. We have heard that loneliness can be as unhealthy as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Freedman points to research that shows both older and younger people are cut off from meaningful connections and so at risk for this unhealthy loneliness. If poor health alone doesn’t convince you this is a problem, consider the estimated \$7 billion spent every year on Medicare resulting from these effects.

Do you want to live forever? Freedman’s answer is for elders to work with youth in their ‘second act.’ “Engagement with others that flows down the generational chain will make you healthier, happier, and likely longer-lived. It’s the real fountain



# Don't Become a Victim of Medicare Fraud

*How to Live Forever continued  
from page 11*

No one ever thinks they could be a victim, until it happens to them. People who take advantage of others are often very savvy. They pay attention to what is happening in people's lives that they can exploit. Scammers know that at age 65, people become eligible for Medicare, which makes them perfect targets. These scammers also know that people understand little about Medicare. Medicare is complicated and most people don't know whether they need to enroll or who to go to with their questions.

It is important to know that scammers will typically contact you by phone. They may call claiming to be a representative from Medicare. They may tell you they need to verify your information to enroll you in Medicare or they may tell you your Medicare information was compromised. They intend to gather your personal information and use it to commit fraud. This simply isn't true. Medicare will only call you requesting personal information in these situations:

- A Medicare health or drug plan can call you if you're already a member of the plan. The agent who helped you join can also call you.
- A customer service representative from 1-800-MEDICARE can call you if you've called and left a message or a representative said that someone would call you back.

If someone calls claiming they are from Medicare and asks for personal information, hang up the phone and call 1-800-MEDICARE. For information about how to protect yourself from Medicare fraud, see *Protecting Yourself & Medicare Fraud*, a Center for Medicare & Medicaid publication.



## SENIOR LINKAGE LINE

If you believe you are a victim of Medicare fraud, call the Senior LinkAge Line® at 800-333-2433 to get help. This free, statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging is a partnership with Minnesota's Area Agencies on Aging. The Senior LinkAge Line is Minnesota's federally designated State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and the place to call for questions and information on Medicare and much more.

### **MNRAAA's VISION:**

To assist older adults  
to thrive.

Stay up-to-date on the  
latest news and follow  
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of youth". He proposes a gap year for grown-ups ready to start their post-midlife course to best prepare to devote it to living their legacy.

In his book, Freedman shares ways that this idea of bringing the generations back together is happening. He describes projects like Nesterly, a home-sharing website that matches young adults with older adults that have extra space; the University of Minnesota's Advanced Careers, a nine-month curriculum for "encore adults," including internships to prepare them for work in nonprofits, public service, or social enterprise; and AARP's Experience Corps where volunteers over 50 tutor children to become better readers. In these descriptions, we learn how these projects are mutually beneficial and make a positive difference in the lives of both the elder and the youth.

Whether you are thinking about your second act or working with those that do, *How to Live Forever: The Enduring Power of Connecting the Generations* by Marc Freedman is an exciting read that explores the concept of finding individual fulfillment and societal health by using the experience of the elder to mentor the younger.