



Volume 105: March/April 2025

Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

Guest Editors: Amanda Hinz, Senior Friendship
Center; Jocelyne Fliger, Elder Care Services

Message from the President

By Darrell J. Drummond, Council on Aging of St. Lucie, Inc.



The Month of May is National Mental Health Month, National Stroke Awareness Month and the anniversary of the passage of the Older Americans Act in 1965. This landmark legislation recognizes the contributions of the senior population and how it continues to provide assistance to individuals 60 years of age and older and insures their long term health and safety.

Recent discussions at the national level have suggested there may be a lack of understanding of how this legislation is a tremendous investment in the future wellbeing of the nation. We must all work tirelessly to insure this funding is protected and that

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changes and expansion to the program are implemented to meet the changing environment of life in the 21st century.

There is no greater fear I have than experiencing a stroke. The loss of mobility, speech and independence is a frightening proposition. Currently, I am going through my annual medical exams to ensure I am being attentive to my health fitness.

The National Stroke Awareness Month focuses on our individual health and during this time, we appreciate the struggles of those who have been stricken by this disease and the caregivers who help support those impacted on a daily basis. More research is needed for prevention and treatment. The month of May is an opportunity to participate in this worthy cause.

As we remember Memorial Day and commemorate the sacrifices of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in defending our nation, we recognize this is so much more than a day off from work! I began my employment at my agency, Council on Aging of St. Lucie County, the week leading up to the Memorial Day weekend thirty years ago. It is a weekend I will always celebrate.

We are concluding the Month of April which is National Volunteer Month. Each year, we celebrate our volunteers who provide invaluable time and expertise to our organizations. Above all, their contributions allow us to meet our goals annually by reducing the cost for the delivery of services they provide to our clients.



Far too often, I see commercials requesting donations for very worthy causes on television and throughout media the arena. As much as I appreciate the organizations drawing attention to their causes, I am concerned about how government continues to reduce its' partnering in these programs. Let's not forget, government is charged with the stewardship of our tax dollars and we should expect that economies of scale dictate that public dollars coupled with private dollars provide the best solution for delivery services for the greater community.

A large part of our focus at our local level is to insure that our county and local governments are contributing, participating and advocating for our local senior community. The key to success in this area is recognition that we must educate and remind our elected officials of the importance of our seniors to our community, while pointing out how committed our senior population is to making their voices heard throughout our community and at the ballot box.

Happy Easter!



Darrell Drummond

Male Caregivers: It's OK To Not Be OK

By Michael Cochrane, Senior Friendship Centers

Flashback to 2008. My husband Ron and I are sitting in our doctor's office, waiting for the results. The words that come next shatter everything we've known: Ron, at 62, has Early Onset Alzheimer's. Our worst fear, one we had seen unfold in his family before, has come true. I'm paralyzed with shock; Ron immediately retreats into denial. This isn't what we expected, not what we had planned for, I don't want to accept this diagnosis. What about our future? I'm not ready.



The questions swirl endlessly: Why him? Why us? Why me?

Fast forward to 2020. Ron's journey with Alzheimer's finally ends in a memory care facility where he passes away. His decline, just as the caregiving resources and materials predicted, took its final bow. Our caregiving journey together that felt endless, tiring, and unpredictable had finally come to an end. I'm left alone—exhausted, heartbroken, and physically and emotionally drained. It's hard to put into words what I feel—empty and strangely relieved all at once. The journey of 45 years we shared is over, but now I must figure out what's next. I have no idea where to begin. My mental state is in pieces—overwhelmed, depleted, and directionless. Long-term caregiving can break you like that.

As time passed, though, I did find some clarity. I rested, reflected, and began to piece back together what my mind and body truly needed. Through all my research, I learned that after caregiving, the mental health of men—like mine—is too often a silent struggle. I didn't know this then, but my discovery of these simple words brought me comfort: "it's OK to not be OK after caregiving". I've come to realize that for so long, mental health—especially for men—has been a taboo subject.

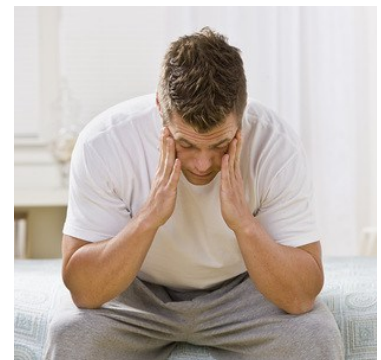
We've been conditioned to think that men must be tough, self-reliant, and emotionally restrained. I remember as a kid, adults would tell me to “be a man” or to “tough it out.” Crying or showing any type of vulnerability wasn't allowed or tolerated.

That “pressure” runs deep within our culture, and it makes it incredibly difficult for men to express vulnerability, seek help, or even recognize that they need it. Studies show that men are less likely than women to seek help for mental health struggles like depression or anxiety. Instead, they often suppress their feelings, which can lead to destructive behaviors like substance abuse, anger, isolation, or even worse, suicide (as the numbers continue to be higher for men than women).

Change is slowly happening though. More people are speaking up about mental health, and society is starting to recognize that mental well-being is just as vital as physical health. This shift is particularly important for men. For me, the first step in my own healing was finding people who understood, people who I could talk to. I joined a grief support group, and it literally became a lifeline. It gave me a place to vent, to listen, to learn, and—most importantly—to rediscover a reason to smile. That group helped me find my footing again. The ground beneath my feet wasn't as “soggy” anymore.

I also learned that there are specific mental health factors that affect men after caregiving, largely due to societal expectations around masculinity. Here are some key challenges many men face after caregiving ends:

- **Emotional Exhaustion:** Caregiving is draining—physically, mentally, and emotionally. For men, the burden can feel even heavier, leading to feelings of burnout, guilt, frustration, sadness and depression.



- **Loss & Grief:** When a loved one passes, many men internalize their grief because they've been taught to bottle up their emotions. This makes it harder to then process sorrow and stress.
- **Isolation:** Caregivers, especially men, can experience loneliness because caregiving takes up so much time and energy. As a result, social connections with friends and family often slip away.
- **Pressure & Guilt:** There's an unspoken pressure on men to "fix things" without asking for help. Caregiving can leave them feeling inadequate or guilty if they can't meet those expectations, leading to internalized stress.
- **Identity & Role Changes:** Caregiving often becomes central to a person's identity. Once the caregiving role ends, men can feel lost, unsure of their purpose, or disconnected from who they are or who they think they should be.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Caregivers are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, or PTSD. For men, it's often harder to seek help for these issues, which can lead to worsened symptoms over time.



Through my research, I also found that there are some mental health strategies that can help men navigate the aftermath of caregiving. Here are a few:

1. **Self-Care:** Men need to prioritize self-care. Physical activity, hobbies, healthy eating, and even volunteering can help men reclaim a sense of purpose and balance after caregiving.

2. Seek Peer Support: Connecting with others who've experienced similar challenges can ease feelings of isolation. Support groups are a great way for men to share their stories and process their emotions.

3. Open Conversations: Men should seek safe spaces to talk openly about their emotions. Whether it's in a group, with friends, or with family, these conversations can help break down the stigma around vulnerability and mental health.

4. Seek Professional Support: Therapy is essential for processing the emotional aftermath of caregiving. A counselor or therapist can provide a safe, non-judgmental environment to work through grief, guilt, and depression.

5. Redefine Masculinity: Men need to broaden their understanding of masculinity. Emotional expression, asking for help, and practicing self-compassion are all important aspects of being, or becoming, a well-rounded, healthy man.

Caregiving has a profound impact on mental health, and, in my humble opinion, I believe that it's OK to not be OK, and to admit that you're struggling afterward. Men often face unique challenges because of societal expectations around masculinity, but the truth is, no one should have to go through this alone. It's time for all of us to recognize this and support each other in breaking down the barriers around mental health. We all deserve to heal and move forward—together.





Humana | Healthy Horizons™

Recognize a Valuable Service Employee and a Senior Volunteer with a FASP Award!

The 2025 FASP Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the Humana Healthy Horizons Best Direct Service Employee of the Year and the Humana Healthy Horizons Senior Volunteer of the Year Awards.

The deadline for submissions is **Friday, June 13, 2025**.

FASP Members are encouraged to nominate a Florida aging service employee or senior volunteer who has:

- Added value to the service benefiting and being delivered to elders
- Gone above and beyond to provide customer service and ensure customer satisfaction
- Developed community resources and support for provided services
- Demonstrated a high level of commitment to excellence

The Humana Healthy Horizons Best Direct Service Employee of the Year Award acknowledges an employee who makes a difference in the lives of seniors individually or through a unit, group, agency or organization.

The Humana Healthy Horizons Senior Volunteer of the Year Award acknowledges the accomplishments of a Senior Volunteer who serves clients.

FASP will present these awards during the Florida Conference on Aging to honor the dedication of Florida service employees and volunteers. The 2025 Florida Conference on Aging will be held August 4-6th, at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando, Florida.

Due to the generosity of Humana Healthy Horizons in Florida, Award winners will receive \$500 for themselves and \$500 for their agency, one year complimentary membership in FASP, complimentary registration to the Florida Conference on Aging and 1 night hotel stay to receive their award.

You can submit nominations at:

Humana Healthy Horizons Best Direct Service Employee of the Year

<https://fasp.wufoo.com/forms/best-direct-service-employee-award-nomination/>

Humana Healthy Horizons Senior Volunteer of the Year

<https://fasp.wufoo.com/forms/senior-volunteer-of-the-year-award/>

If you have any questions, please contact moreinfo@fasp.net or call **(850) 222-3524**.



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

By Jocelyne Fliger, Elder Care Services

June 15th is the annual international recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). This important day serves as a call to action and helps raise awareness about the often silent suffering of older adults who experience abuse, neglect, and exploitation. WEAAD is when we reflect on senior abuse, in all its forms, and come forward to educate communities and empower individuals in order to protect our elders.

Elder abuse is a substantial public health issue that affects seniors across all backgrounds, regardless of socioeconomic status, culture, gender, or race. It's defined as any act within a relationship of trust that results in harm to an older person.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 1 in 6 older people experience some type of abuse; however, due to underreporting, the actual numbers are likely much higher. Often, seniors will not report abuse due to dependence on the abuser, embarrassment, or incapacity. Elder abuse takes many forms, all with serious outcomes. Financial and physical abuse are often top of mind, but elder abuse can also be sexual or emotional, or include neglect and abandonment.

WEAAD is commemorated in various ways, including wearing purple, as purple is the official color of WEAAD and symbolizes wisdom, dignity, and compassion. Educational events often occur around WEAAD and are held to inform others about the signs of elder abuse and how to report it. WEAAD is also acknowledged through public awareness campaigns, illuminated landmarks, and community gatherings.

Everyone is encouraged to get involved in WEAAD because it takes a village to make a difference. Education is the first step, and learning about the signs of elder abuse and how to report it can be life-saving.





The National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) both offer free resources that can help educate people of all ages. Maintaining regular contact with older adults in your life, especially those who may be isolated, is also important.

Breaking down the walls of social isolation improves senior mental health, but also makes sure that someone is available to prevent or report abuse. In Florida, everyone is a mandated reporter who suspects senior abuse, so it is important to be able to recognize when someone is being mistreated.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a reminder that we must work together to create a society where older adults are safe, respected, and valued. By raising awareness, educating communities, and taking action, we can protect our elders and ensure they live with dignity and security.



**WORLD ELDER ABUSE
AWARENESS DAY**

Building Strong Support for Elders



For 70 Years, Meals on Wheels Has Helped Seniors

The Osceola Council on Aging is a key provider of Meals on Wheels (MOW) in Central Florida, a program that has been delivering meals to homebound seniors for over 70 years. With more than 5,000 locations nationwide, Central Florida's MOW serves around 70,000 meals monthly, contributing to over half a million meals annually in the region.



Wendy Ford, Osceola
County Council on Aging

March is a significant month for MOW, as it commemorates the program's addition to the Older Americans Act in 1972. The annual March for Meals fundraiser, held nationwide since 2002, raises awareness and funds to combat senior hunger. With the senior population growing, continued support is essential to sustain and expand this vital program.

Click [here](#) to read more.

Older Americans Month 2025 Theme: Flip the Script on Aging



Every May, ACL leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month (OAM), a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitment to serving older adults.

The 2025 theme, Flip the Script on Aging, focuses on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. This year, join us in honoring older adults' contributions, exploring the many opportunities for staying active and engaged as we age, and highlighting the opportunities for purpose, exploration, and connection that come with aging.

Click [here](#) to read more from ACL.

Social Isolation, Loneliness, & Benefits of Companionship

By Andrew Brannan, BScN, RN

Volunteer companionship provides immense value for socially isolated and lonely seniors in our communities, as demonstrated in the following story.

Evelyn is eighty-two years old and lives alone. She arrived in Emergency Room for the sixth time this month after tripping on a misplaced rug in her living room.

“My back’s broken! There’s shooting pain everywhere! My pain pills ain’t workin’!! I need to be admitted to the hospital!” wailed Evelyn from her hospital bed.

But all her scans were negative: no broken bones.

Despite Evelyn’s pleas for hospital admission, the ER doctor swiftly discharged her with an extra dose of pain medicine. The nurse was pressured to discharge quickly because ambulances flooded in, and they needed Evelyn’s bed.

As Evelyn was assisted to dress and lumber into a wheelchair, she recognized her nurse’s accent from up North and said, “Me and my husband also moved to Florida 26 years ago to get away from winter, but now I’m all alone because my husband died.”

Evelyn and her nurse discussed their mutual love for Florida’s unique flora and fauna. They shared a special passion for springtime flowers and migratory birds.

Evelyn’s facial expression changed within moments of conversation. Her look of distress melted into a relaxed state, and the pain washed away. This wasn’t from the pain pill, because she declined it. Her pain evaporated due to the power of human connection, which is the antidote to loneliness.





The power of human connection is the value that volunteer companions provide.

According to a study in the Annals of Behavioral Medicine: “The impact of pain is reduced in individuals who perceive a greater sense of inclusion from and engagement with others.” (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6301311/>)

Subjective experience of pain is heightened due to loneliness, hence Evelyn feels like all her bones are shattered, despite lack of clinical evidence showing debilitating injuries.

According to a large study of 44 thousand participants, loneliness increased the chance of emergency room visits by 15% for women, adjusting for age, health problems, and income (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35065598/>).

Loneliness causes increased hospital visits yet also causes or worsens medical conditions which, in turn, increase dependency on the medical system. The Center for Disease Control states that social isolation and loneliness can increase the risk for a range of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, anxiety, suicidality, dementia, and ultimately, early death (<https://www.cdc.gov/social-connectedness/risk-factors/index.html>).

Evelyn seeks inclusion and engagement from people in busy, impersonal hospitals. But the social contact she seeks is better served through volunteer companionship.



Volunteer companions provide a critical role in prolonging the health span and lifespan of seniors – and this is not an overstatement. A companion for Evelyn could help identify the misplaced rug she tripped over, therefore preventing a life-threatening bone fracture or brain-bleed. Sharing the joy of birds and flowers with Evelyn is pain medicine, and a potential life-saver.

The benefits of companionship serve Evelyn, but also serve the volunteers. Volunteers generate a sense of purpose for themselves, and help reduce their own mental health risks (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12473312/>).

Providing the benefits to seniors and volunteers alike, organizations such as Elder Care Services (ECS) of Tallahassee have been providing improved quality of life for seniors for over 53 years (<https://eldercarebigbend.org/about>). “It’s our ultimate goal to keep our clients in their homes and as independent as possible while providing them and their families with the services they need to age with dignity.” <https://eldercarebigbend.org/in-home>

AmeriCorps, the nation’s largest funder of volunteer efforts in the country, have been addressing this issue for decades. Their Senior Companion program, administered in the Big Bend of Florida through ECS, provides a crucial service that people like Evelyn need. Senior Companions provide a range of activities including sharing hobbies and interests to helping ensure a comfortable and safe living environment. <https://eldercarebigbend.org/senior-companion>

In summary, Evelyn’s mental and physical suffering are inextricably linked. She relies on a heavily burdened medical system to combat her loneliness which is caused by her social isolation. Volunteer Companions, as provided by services like ECS, are critical in ameliorating the negative physical and mental health effects of social isolation and loneliness.



The DOE A Summary of Programs was renamed to Department Overview. Click [here](#) to read the most recent.

Want better healthcare? Share your life story.



When 87-year-old Tedd Determan was hospitalized with late-stage lung cancer, his wife, Jean, noticed his treatment felt “cold” and impersonal. Hoping to change that, she taped photos and articles about his life on the hospital walls. The effect was immediate—medical staff began treating him with more warmth and respect.

Next Avenue highlights the power of storytelling in healthcare, showing how sharing a patient’s story can build trust and improve care. Their article, “Tips on Telling Your Patient Story for Better Health Care,” offers guidance on crafting an impactful narrative.

Click [here](#) to read the full article.

Time for a Tune-Up: Men's Health After 50

By Amanda Hinz, Senior Friendship Centers

We all know the importance of getting an oil change and sticking to regular maintenance for our vehicles. So why do so many men avoid getting the same kind of upkeep for their minds and bodies?

According to a 2019 AARP survey, 72% of men said they'd rather do household chores than go to the doctor. Let's be honest — most women probably feel the same about going to the gynecologist. But here's the difference: women are conditioned from a young age to expect and accept annual checkups as a part of life. For men, the messaging has often been the opposite.

So why do men avoid going to the doctor? Do they even need to go? And how can we help “re-train” the men in our lives to treat their health with the same care they give their trucks or lawnmowers?

The “Man Up” Mentality Is Costing Lives

From an early age, boys are taught to be tough. Don't cry. Don't complain. “Walk it off.” “Man up.” These ideas stick with them well into adulthood. As a result, more than 40% of men say they only go to the doctor when they have a serious medical condition. Over half admit they don't talk about their health at all — not with friends, not with family, not even with a healthcare provider.

We've spent decades idolizing stoic heroes who fix everything themselves and never ask for help. And while society is slowly redefining what it means to be a man, there's still a long way to go.



The Numbers Don't Lie

Prostate cancer affects 1 in 9 men, making it the most common cancer among American men after skin cancer. But early detection through routine screening can dramatically improve outcomes. The same goes for conditions like high blood pressure, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes — all of which become more common after age 50.

And we can't forget mental health. Depression, anxiety, and loneliness can take a serious toll, especially in older men. But again, that same stigma — that vulnerability is weakness — keeps too many men from seeking support. Talking about emotions, asking for help, or simply admitting you're struggling shouldn't be taboo. It should be a sign of strength.

Rewriting the Script

So how do we change the narrative? It starts with small, intentional conversations. Remind the men in your life — and maybe yourself — that health checkups aren't a sign of weakness. They're maintenance. They're strength. They're the smart thing to do.

Just like you wouldn't drive 10,000 miles without checking your oil, you shouldn't go years without checking in on your physical and mental well-being. Prevention and early detection are key. So book that appointment, talk to your doctor, and yes, even talk to your friends.

Because living a long, healthy life isn't just about surviving — it's about thriving. And that starts with showing up for yourself.



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<https://www.instagram.com/seniorfriendshipcenters/>





MEN:

Get It Checked.

Checkup and Screening
Guidelines for Men



Checkups and Screenings

	When?	Ages		
		20-39	40-49	50+
Physical Exam Review overall health status, perform a thorough physical exam, and discuss health related topics.	Every 3 years Every 2 years Every year	✓	✓	✓
Blood Pressure High blood pressure (hypertension) has no symptoms, but can cause permanent damage to body organs.	Every year	✓	✓	✓
TB Skin Test Should be done on occasion of exposure or suggestive symptoms at direction of physician. Some occupations may require more frequent testing for public health indications.	Every 5 years	✓	✓	✓
Blood Tests & Urinalysis Screens for various illnesses and diseases (such as cholesterol, diabetes, kidney or thyroid dysfunction) before symptoms occur.	Every 3 years Every 2 years Every year	✓	✓	✓
EKG Electrocardiogram screens for heart abnormalities.	Baseline Every 2 years Every year	Age 30	✓	✓
Tetanus Booster Prevents lockjaw.	Every 10 years	✓	✓	✓
Rectal Exam Screens for hemorrhoids, lower rectal problems, colon and prostate cancer (see PSA Blood Test, below).	Every Year	✓	✓	✓
PSA Blood Test Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is produced by the prostate. Levels rise when there is an abnormality such as an infection, enlargement or cancer. Testing should be done in collaboration with your physician. *Some medical associations recommend that men speak to their health care providers about a baseline PSA blood test at age 40. Men at high risk, including African Americans, should consider an annual prostate exam beginning at age 40.	Every Year		*	✓
Hemoccult Screens the stool for microscopic amounts of blood that can be the first indication of polyps or colon cancer.	Every Year		✓	✓
Colorectal Health A flexible scope examines the rectum, sigmoid and descending colon for cancer at its earliest and treatable stages. It also detects polyps, which are benign growths that can progress to cancer if not found early.	Every 3-4 Years			✓
Chest X-Ray Should be considered in smokers over the age of 45. The usefulness of this test on a yearly basis is debatable due to poor cure rates of lung cancer.	Discuss with a physician		✓	✓
Bone Health Bone mineral density test. Testing is best done under the supervision of your physician.	Discuss with a physician			Age 60
Self Exams Testicle: To find lumps in their earliest stages. Skin: To look for signs of changing moles, freckles, or early skin cancer. Oral: To look for signs of cancerous lesions in the mouth. Breast: To find abnormal lumps in their earliest stages.	Monthly by self	✓	✓	✓
Testosterone Screening Low testosterone symptoms include low sex drive, erectile dysfunction, fatigue and depression. Initial screening for symptoms with a questionnaire followed by a simple blood test.	Discuss with a physician		✓	✓
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) Sexually active adults who consider themselves at risk for STDs should be screened for syphilis, chlamydia, HIV, and other STDs.	Under physician supervision	✓	✓	✓

Men's Health Network does not provide medical services but provides this maintenance schedule as a reminder of your need to take responsibility for safeguarding your health. Regular checkups and age-appropriate screenings CAN improve your health and reduce premature death and disability. You should consult your health care provider to determine if these screenings are right for you and about the benefits of earlier screenings, especially if you are a member of a high risk group or have a family history of disease. For more information about men's health, contact: Men's Health Network: 202-543-MHN-1, www.menshealthnetwork.org



Thank You Sponsors!

