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Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

Guest Editors: Mary Jo McKay, Hillsborough County
Department of Aging Services; Carlos Martinez,
United HomeCare

Message from the President

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



In October of this year, my father turned 94 years old. Fortunately, he is still independent and living at home. He is very involved in all things political and is a faithful watcher of news television. As a result of the 2024 campaign season, my father has suggested that he is overwhelmed by our national discord. Now that the campaign season is over, more

than ever, we need to do our part to make it a much more positive and collaborative environment in 2025. Through this year's process, I am taking inventory of the fact that not all of us feel the same way politically. Even though we don't all approach

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the issues we face in the same way, I am convinced we all feel deeply about the health and well-being of the many seniors we serve on a daily basis. As Tip O'Neill once said, "All politics is local"! Therefore, it is important for us to remember that the representation below the federal level is critical in our ability to meet the needs of our communities. It is at the local and state level where we have the greatest opportunity to help shape policy for the future. I encourage everyone to make sure you are strengthening your relationships with your local leaders and are making a plan to educate the new representatives who are taking office.

Given the suggestion that our new administration may be looking to reduce and/or remove many of the vaccines we have all come to trust and utilize, we need to be present and vocal to insure our health concerns are not put at risk. As our representatives work to prioritize the spending plans for the new year, let's make sure our efforts are across all political factions and laser focused on positive outcomes.



During the course of 2024, FASP members have been successful in distributing advocacy brochures and contacting Legislators. Josh Newby, our Board member from Pensacola, developed an advocacy video utilized extensively at our annual conference. The FASP Newsletter throughout the year, brought great insight and timely information for our membership. Let's not forget, many of you and your organizations worked tirelessly during the hurricane season to assist in the preparation and recovery of seniors during the storms.

As always, much of the behind the scene work is done by our professional staff. We continue to be grateful for the work of the Margaret Lynn Duggar and Associates staff for their support and insight.

Finally, I want to speak to the fact that I have been involved in the Florida senior network for more than thirty (30) years. During that time, I have had my battles with the local, regional and state groups who have not always shared our vision of a fully functioning and successful delivery system. What I struggled most with was our association with the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) who contracted our services and monitored our programs.

Over the years, our relationship has changed and the leadership at the AAA level has improved immensely. As a matter fact, FASP has enjoyed the benefit of joint meetings and constant dialogue between our groups to improve and advance senior service in the State. I want to thank the leadership of the Florida Association of Area Agencies (F4A) for their continued dedication and leadership in advancing senior programs and funding for the seniors of the State of Florida.

As always, thank you to all of our membership for your dedication and support! Please enjoy this holiday season and Happy New Year!



Darrell Drummond

Update on “Do More, Feel Better” Program for Senior Centers – Hillsborough County and USF Partnership

By Nicole Crawford, DrPH, LCSW, Mary Jo McKay, & Amber Gum, PhD

What is “Do More Feel Better”?

“Do More Feel Better” (DMFB) is based on an evidence-based behavioral intervention for depression called “Behavioral Activation” (BA). DMFB and BA both involve helping an individual with depressive symptoms become more active doing activities they value and enjoy. BA has over 50 years’ worth of research evidence documenting that it is a highly effective treatment for depression for people from many different backgrounds. DMFB is a streamlined version of BA that is delivered by trained and supervised older adult volunteer coaches. DMFB is delivered via senior centers and other community-based aging service organizations (CBOs) to improve access to mental health care. DMFB involves nine 30-45 minute weekly visits that can be done in person or remotely. During each visit, the coach follows a structured protocol, provides psychoeducation, and teaches activity planning skills to boost older adults’ mood and energy and address patterns of avoidance, withdrawal and inactivity that can come with depression. Licensed mental health or social work professionals train volunteer coaches (selected for their interest as well as strong interpersonal and organizational skills) in DMFB. Training consists of four 2-hour training workshops over 2-4 weeks that involve didactics, demonstrations, and role plays. Trainers then provide weekly group supervision for trained coaches.

How is DMFB being implemented and evaluated?

Dr. Patrick Raue and colleagues at the University of Washington led a large pilot study of DMFB in 4 Seattle-area senior centers, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). They trained 21 DMFB coaches to deliver DMFB and 4 MSWs to deliver BA. They then randomly assigned 56 clients with clinically significant depressive symptoms (Patient Health Questionnaire [PHQ-9] scores >10) to receive DMFB [42 clients] or BA [14 clients].





Of the 21 coaches who began training, 17 were certified (3 dropped out, 1 did not learn the intervention well enough to continue). Comparing across clients in DMFB and BA, both groups were highly satisfied with the intervention, and both groups improved similarly in their activity levels and depressive symptoms.

A larger definitive study is now underway at the University of Washington, Weill Cornell Medical College (New York City), and University of South Florida (Tampa Bay region), also funded by NIMH. Across the three sites, 288 English-speaking and 96 Spanish-speaking older adults with depressive symptoms are being enrolled, with half randomized to receive DMFB and half randomized to receive BA. To date, 43 DMFB coaches and 35 BA clinicians have been trained successfully, and 247 English-speaking clients have been enrolled. Also, Spanish-speaking DMFB coaches and BA clinicians (13 and 12, respectively) have been trained successfully, and 52 Spanish-speaking clients have been enrolled. Almost all research and program activities have been conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, either via video-conferencing or telephone. The study is being conducted in close collaboration with 8 senior centers per site, who have made physical space available for center participants who prefer to meet in-person to assist with the study recruitment of coaches, clinicians, and clients.

What is the personal impact of DMFB?

Clients, coaches, and clinicians are reporting positive experiences to date. The coaches have been able to learn DMFB and deliver it with fidelity, based on audiotape ratings by external experts. They report enjoying learning and being able to help others with depression. Many clients have reported improved depressive symptoms. They have also reported becoming more active, such as spending more time with family and friends, participating in their local senior center, gardening, helping others, and engaging in leisure activities they enjoy.





Of particular note, clients have been able to become more active despite challenges that many older adults typically face, such as chronic pain, difficulty getting around, being socially or physically isolated, or experiencing grief over loss of loved ones. Their successes in these areas are likely due to the program's focus on helping clients choose their own activities, based on what is most important, enjoyable, and feasible for them.

What's next?

While we complete the current study over the next year, we are preparing for larger-scale dissemination, pending final results being consistent with the pilot study and the team's observations thus far. For example, we have begun developing an implementation manual that includes resources for senior centers and other aging service settings, such as guidance and tools to prepare for DMFB; select, train, and supervise DMFB coaches; recruit clients and monitor their progress; and conduct program evaluation. The study team has assembled a Dissemination Advisory Council of national experts, including representatives from NCOA and USAging, to provide input on these resources and efforts. We have also created a survey for organizations that have not participated in DMFB to assess their interest in facilitating the DMFB program and factors that would make them successful delivering DMFB. A small number of aging service organizations outside the research study are currently piloting DMFB and conducting their own program evaluation, with consultation from our team. Interested senior center or aging service personnel are welcome to contact us for more information now and in the future (dmfb@uw.edu).

[For additional resources, click here](#)





Twelve Ways of Giving to Older Adults

By Carlos Martinez, United HomeCare

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

—Mahatma Ghandi

Be Inspired and lose yourself in the service of others by helping older adults. The New Year brings renewed hope for achieving personal goals and finding happiness. Neuroscience shows that giving can significantly enhance your joy and improve your overall health.



Acts of kindness can reduce stress, combat depression, keep your mind engaged, and provide a sense of purpose. While volunteering offers essential support to those in need, it can also bring even greater benefits to you.

It's important to consider various causes when giving, especially older adults, who are often overlooked. United HomeCare invites you to volunteer with us. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving seniors, disabled adults, and their family caregivers in South Florida, we are acutely aware of the needs of older adults.

Many frail elders experience isolation and loneliness. Your support as a volunteer is crucial in helping them remain engaged in the community as they age. Our mission is increasingly vital, especially as the older adult population continues to grow. After all, **“There’s just no place like home.”**



Here are 12 ways you can help older adults in South Florida:

1. Donate to charitable organizations that assist the elderly.
2. Volunteer your time and talents.
3. Spread the word! Inform your neighbors, family, friends, and colleagues and share on social media.
4. Become an Ambassador and advocate for the elderly.
5. Buy a gift certificate for personal home care services.
6. Visit an assisted living facility, senior center, or nursing home to offer your time, talents, and engaging conversation.
7. Help an elderly neighbor.
8. Teach your children to treat elders with dignity and respect.
9. Assist a family caregiver.
10. Stay involved in your community.
11. Learn from the elderly; they are a treasure!
12. Consider adding volunteering and charitable giving to your bucket list this year. You'd be surprised by the impact you can make.

For more information about year-end charitable giving and how you can support United HomeCare®, please call 305.716.0710, or visit unitedhomecare.com or avusconnect.org

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HHS Vaccine Project



The Florida Council on Aging was awarded \$200,000 from the US Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote respiratory vaccine awareness, literacy, and clinics from September 2024 – January 2025. The grant was written so that they could send financial resources and supplies to providers who would host vaccine clinics and educate about respiratory vaccinations – flu, COVID and RSV.

FCOA is working with Walgreens Pharmacy to support clinics with our partners. Thank you to the many partners who are already work with us to increase the vaccination rate among older adults.

For more information, [contact fcoa@fcoa.org](mailto:fcoa@fcoa.org)

Intergenerational Volunteerism: Generations Working Together for Older Adults

By Alina Palenzuela, United HomeCare

Intergenerational Volunteer Day

Celebrated on December 5, 2024, Intergenerational Volunteer Day honors incredible volunteers who give their time, love, and talent to help those in need. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." As we celebrate



our volunteers, who help us fulfill our mission to support older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers in maintaining dignity and independence, we invite you to "Be inspired and lose yourself in the service of others by contributing to make a positive difference."

We hope to inspire you to offer your time, talents, and compassion to assist those in need or consider implementing an intergenerational volunteer program within your organization. Volunteering with United HomeCare or other organizations can help create a more caring and connected community. Your kindness matters more than you know. As the year comes to a close, and in honor of "Intergenerational Volunteer Day" United HomeCare® extends our gratitude to all of our volunteers, UHC's Volunteer Board of Directors and Intergenerational Volunteer Program volunteers, AVUS Connect® and AVUS Tech Pals®--youth and seniors—"Generations working together for older adults."

Connecting Generations

Intergenerational volunteerism brings together people of all ages through shared experiences and activities. By connecting generations to support older adult causes, these interactions foster meaningful discussions and mentoring opportunities. Young adults gain valuable insights from older adults, who possess a wealth of experience. Through these exchanges, they often find common ground, establishing lasting bonds and raising aware-

ness to ensure that our elders are never alone or forgotten. **Aging service providers across Florida can benefit from implementing intergenerational volunteer programs,** which have proven to enhance the emotional and mental health of those living at home in isolation and in facilities. Seniors' mental health is just as important as their physical well-being.

Aging can bring challenges such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression, but together, we can make a significant difference in improving their lives. We are dedicated to providing guidance and assistance to those in need. Many older adults express that the system can



be confusing. **Our staff and volunteers take the time to help them navigate the options,** explaining the differences between home- and community-based care and long-term care. We also inform them about how to apply and the eligibility criteria for home care or assisted living. Recently, at an event, we assisted a homeless older adult with his application, guiding and advocating on his behalf, and enabling him to transition from living in his car to living in an assisted

living facility. By providing support, fostering connections, and spreading awareness, we ensure that our community's elders receive the care they deserve.

The Importance of Intergenerational Volunteerism and Its Crucial Role

Intergenerational volunteerism has played a crucial role in fostering fellowship and empowering seniors through various initiatives and activities ranging from a pickleball tournament, an evening of dominoes and music, preparing seniors for hurricane season, and distributing holiday baskets to brighten their holidays. Youth volunteers also support older adults and family caregivers through technology assistance. They make home visits to provide tech support, companionship, and help with errands. They assist seniors in connecting with their case managers, friends, and the world around them.

Serving Up Fun and Raising Funds for Older Adults

AVUS Connect® and AVUS Tech Pals® are United HomeCare's certified volunteer and student-led intergenerational senior assurance programs, designed to combat loneliness, social isolation, and depression among older adults through volunteerism. Volunteers work to alleviate these issues by promoting connections between generations and engaging their peers in supporting causes for older adults.

Pickleball 4 A Purpose

United HomeCare® (UHC) recently hosted "Pickleball 4 A Purpose," a fundraising event organized by AVUS Connect Volunteers Ava Weissman and Bianca Ceballos from the American Heritage High School AVUS Connect® Club. The intergenerational event featured 26 teams formed by older adults and youth, fostering friendships and enjoyment and aimed to support UHC's AVUS Connect® program promoting socialization and fellowship between generations. **Pickleball4APurpose, Inc. raised \$2,000 for United HomeCare to support technology for older adults.**

Preparing our Seniors for Hurricane Season

United HomeCare is proud to participate in the **Florida Council on Aging – Florida Power & Light Hurricane Meal Kits initiative**, which aims to support seniors by preparing them for hurricane season. Thanks to the generous contribution from the FCOA and FPL, aging service providers across Florida have been able to offer this vital service to seniors statewide for the past four years. The meal kits include a three-day supply of shelf-stable meals, water, and snacks.

Together with our volunteers and community partners, United HomeCare distributes the kits at various centers and through door-to-door deliveries in some of Miami-Dade's most underserved communities, including Liberty City, Allapattah, West Coconut Grove, Medley, and Miami Gardens. Additionally, kits were provided at the Hialeah Housing Authority and the



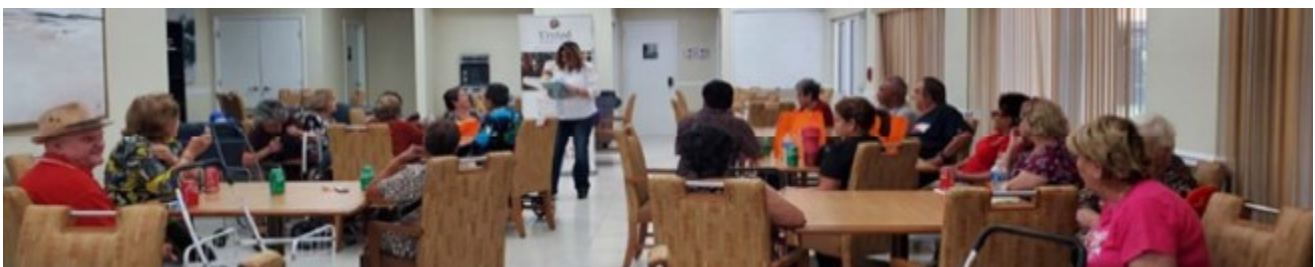
Volunteers of America Florida (VOAFL) for low-income residents. This state and community-wide initiative has already assisted thousands of older residents in Miami-Dade County in becoming hurricane-ready.

In partnership with community organizations, and with the generous donation received from The Miami Foundation Impact Resilience Fund and meals received from Florida Community Care, United HomeCare AVUS Connect, and Miami-Dade College Changemaker Volunteers distributed hurricane meal kits to seniors throughout Miami-Dade County, mostly low-income and underserved seniors.

This year, thanks to additional support for Hurricane Preparedness from the Miami Foundation's Disaster Resilience Fund, disaster relief kits were also prepared, underscoring the invaluable contributions of these intergenerational volunteers, grantors, and community partners. The kits contained essential supplies and hurricane preparedness information, including shelf-stable meals, flashlights, and fans, to help seniors prepare for hurricane season.

Thanks to **The Miami Foundation Impact Resilience Fund and Florida Community Care**, United HomeCare AVUS Connect, Miami-Dade College Changemaker and Florida International University volunteers, we distributed hurricane meal kits to seniors throughout Miami-Dade County, mostly low-income and underserved.

Miami Dade County seniors were safer this hurricane season, thanks to the support of various community partners including United Way Miami LINC volunteers, U.S. Senator Rene Garcia and Miami-Dade County Commissioner representing District 13, along with H.O.P.E. (Helping Our People Everyday), TD Bank, Miami-Dade College West Campus, and The Thelma Gibson Health Initiative, over 2,700 seniors were better informed and equipped for this year's hurricane season, which concluded in November.



Relief for Grandparents Raising Children

Grandparents raising grandchildren is a trend that is becoming increasingly common in America, presenting various unexpected challenges financially, legally, and emotionally—for older adults, many of whom struggle to care for themselves.



In the U.S., approximately 2.5 million grandparents have primary responsibility for their grandchildren, while 7.5 million children live in households with a grandparent. This shift often arises from parental issues such as substance abuse, mental health challenges, or physical problems, leading to more grandparents taking on parental roles. Around 15% of Miami-Dade County's vulnerable, low-income, and underserved populations are grandparents raising grandchildren. Our goal is to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as their overall quality of life.

United HomeCare is launching a **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren** Initiative to help grandparents with the overwhelming challenges of caregiving for a child and an older adult. This includes helping with applications for home and community-based care programs, offering immediate services like sitter and respite support for their self-care, and volunteer support through United HomeCare's AVUS Connect® Intergenerational Volunteer Program. Your contributions will help fund this vital initiative to assist those in need.

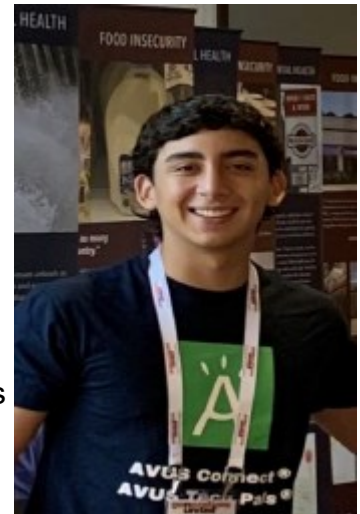


Ask around your office and you may be surprised to learn that you have colleagues and volunteers who are grandparents raising children. At United HomeCare, we have a few, and one whom you will especially remember as this year's FCOA/FPL 2024 Quality Senior Living Award for Public Service recipient, Dr. Janette Campbell. She is actively involved in the Miami-Dade County Foster Adoptive Parent Association, serving as a Foster and Adoptive Parent/Grandparent. Dr. Campbell and her husband are also raising an autistic grandchild.

Over the years, they have helped two adoptive grandchildren, supporting their education and reuniting them with their parents. She is also a family caregiver for her husband, who has Parkinson's, and provides support for older adults and children in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. United HomeCare (UHC) is actively reaching out to assist grandparents who have become primary caregivers for their grandchildren, with respite, home-delivered meals, homemaker services, and opportunities for access to care especially as their own ability to care for themselves diminishes.

AVUS Connect® and AVUS Tech Pals®

AVUS Connect® was established as a community service project by Shawn Martinez, a Posse Scholar at Pomona College in Claremont, California, and a recipient of the 2023 Silver Knight Award, who initially started the program when he was a high school student at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School (Class of 2023). The program has since expanded to involve other students from local high schools under the United HomeCare Volunteer Department. The program has been recognized for its positive impact, receiving the William R. Simms Award for Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy—Group. This award was presented by the Association of Fundraising Professionals during their Global Philanthropy Conference in New Orleans in 2023 where Shawn accepted the award on behalf of AVUS Connect. Although Shawn is now a college student, he continues to advocate for older adults. His commitment was evident during his workshop presentation titled “Youth Busting Senior Isolation” at the Generations United Conference in Washington, D.C. Shawn also provides strategic guidance to the new leadership of the program and champions intergenerational initiatives that address issues such as grandparents raising children and food insecurity among older adults in America.





AVUS Tech Pals® volunteers from colleges and universities throughout South Florida meet professionals in the aging field, encouraging them to consider careers in elder care. They provide technology education, either in person, via video chat, or by phone, helping seniors connect with volunteers, case managers, and family members through the use of tablet computers. These efforts enrich the lives of older adults while also providing meaningful experiences for the volunteers themselves.

There's just no place like home! We know that our community's seniors would prefer to remain living at home and we strive to provide the support they need to help prevent and/or delay institutional placement. We believe that generations working together for older adults enhances the quality of life for our clients and community members on the waitlist

Enhanced Payment for Social Determinants of Health Bill Above Program



Sunshine Health thanks providers for all you do to help keep our Medicaid members healthy and ensure they receive assistance for their Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).

To show our appreciation for your efforts, Sunshine Health is offering additional reimbursement to providers who submit detailed claims or encounters using Social Determinant of Health ICD-10-CM Z-codes.

To learn more about SDOH payments, visit <https://www.sunshinehealth.com/newsroom/sdoh-g-codes.html>

Hillsborough County Aging Services Helps the Most Vulnerable Residents Through Storms

By Mary Jo McKay, Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services



From the earliest signs that Hurricanes Helene and Milton would impact the Tampa Bay area, teams with Hillsborough County Aging Services went to work ensuring the safety of the County's most frail and vulnerable residents.

Planning for such weather events begins when seniors first enroll in any of Hillsborough County Aging Services' programs. Seniors are evaluated and registered for special needs shelters and transportation to shelters if they have a need. Shelter and transportation arrangements are reassessed each year. At the beginning of every hurricane season, Aging Services provides clients with a week's worth of shelf-stable meals to use in the event of a storm.

As each hurricane barreled toward the Tampa Bay area, Aging Services used a mass calling system to contact all its clients to ensure they had a plan in place or were in a safe location to ride out the storm, along with enough supplies such as food, water, and medications to last for several days. The reassurance calls provided seniors with an option to have a staff member call them back within 24 hours to help them prepare for the storm's arrival and remain safe and secure during the worst of the weather.

During the hurricanes, Aging Services team members help to staff the County's evacuation shelters located at various sites throughout the County.



During each storm, several shelters, some for people with special needs, such as those requiring oxygen, were opened to house not just seniors, but any County resident needing to evacuate.

As soon as the storm passed, seniors received another call to check on their well-being and offer assistance with replenishing meals and referrals for debris removal and emergency housing. The Aging Services teams provided personal hygiene items and other essentials, replaced a few damaged microwaves, and assisted with FEMA applications. The aftermath of the storm had the Aging Services team operating comfort stations, points of distributions (PODS), and meal distribution centers that were opened in the hardest-hit areas of the County. The comfort stations offered air conditioning, shower and laundry facilities, cellphone charging, and hot meals. Seniors, who are often particularly sensitive to the heat and humidity, were able to cool off alongside other residents, charge their cellphones and check in with loved ones near and far, as well as get a hot meal. Citizens were able to get water, ice, shelf stable meals, baby formula, hygiene kits, household cleaning supplies and tarps at POD locations and lunch and dinner at the meal distribution centers.

Reaching far beyond the day-to-day programs, events, care management, in home services, senior center and adult day care center operations, Hillsborough County Aging Services brought the community's senior residents through two back-to-back storms safely through preplanning, reassurance, and support.



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