



Florida Association of
Aging Services Providers

Volume 109 November/December 2025

Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

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

Message from the President

By Josh Newby, Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc.

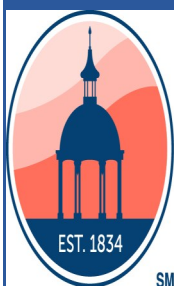


If you spend any amount of time on the portion of the internet largely dominated by voices younger than 40 (Reddit, TikTok YouTube, Instagram, etc.), you'll notice a line of economic argumentation and a premise that is completely taken for granted: it's all old people's fault. I don't recommend you frequent those corners of the web, but as someone who does, it is striking to me just how much animosity exists between generations. Mention any topic that disadvantages the young—housing, wages, healthcare—and hordes of teenagers, 20- and 30-somethings will be quick to cite Ronald Reagan, baby boomers and other neoliberal, traditionalist philosophies about work and money as the reasons for rampant discontentment.

Table of Contents

President's Message	1-3
Truths I've Learned As A Hospice Nurse	4
New SNAP Work Rules	5
National Alzheimer's Awareness Month	6
Results: Do More Feel Better Senior Program	7-8
Intergenerational Programs: Bridging Hearts, Inspiring Service, Strengthening Community	9-11
Hillsborough County's One Stop Center	12
Retirement: Teresa K. Barton	13
Retirement: Darrell Drummond	14
FASP Member Rates	15
Happy Holidays!	16
Thank You Sponsors!	17

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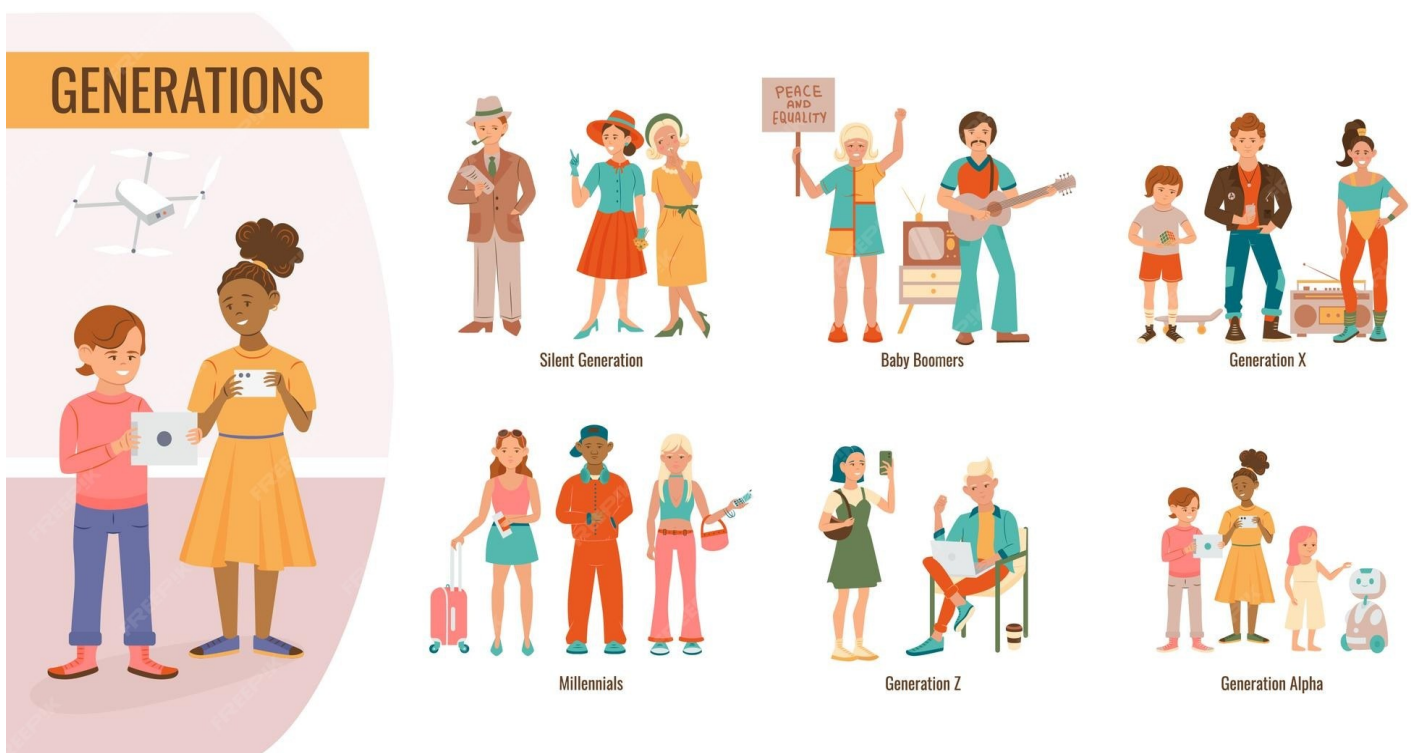
Hillsborough
County Florida



“Citizens United,” “billionaires,” “tech bros,” and “boomerism” (a counter to the Gen X-coined “doomerism” used to describe Gen Z depression): these terms are the lingua franca of the online young. This rage creates a challenge for aging services providers, as more and more of our workforce and donor class are made up of those who harbor at least some suspicion of those we are charged with caring for.

I think we need to think very carefully about the motivations behind this suspicion and resist the temptation to write them off as “kids these days.” The internet has created a world in which none of us ever have to engage with opinions we don’t like or with the people who hold those opinions. This form of social drift can be seen everywhere: not just in empty bowling alleys, as argued in the brilliant 2000 Robert D. Putnam book, but at train stops, grocery stores, doctors’ offices: anywhere people from different walks of life are forced to congregate, and two decades ago, would have been forced to talk to pass the time. Now, of course, 90 percent of these people have their neck craned down at their phone. We are filling our brains with content meant to incite hate, and the results speak for themselves: most people, but especially the young, feel our economic and political situations are worsening. Compare that to when you or even I were young. We marveled at and anticipated the world of the future, curious what wonders it would bring. But now, most feel pessimistic about tomorrow.

Much of this malaise, according to economist Kyla Scanlon, is tied to a culture of extraction. I think often about how products were once manufactured versus how they are manufactured now. Used to be, you would buy a Crock-Pot and expect to use it for life. Holmes Products wanted to deliver the best possible and longest-lasting solution to your cooking needs, because if it broke a couple years after purchasing, you would tell all your friends and no one would buy Crock-Pots anymore.



Their guiding ethos seemed to be: how do we deliver the best possible appliance to our customers and still turn a profit? Now, with built-in obsolescence, the question seems to be: how do we deliver the crappiest possible product that people will still buy? All that to say, today's median-age workforce feels exploited, sold false promises about college and merit, and they look to those who created this world and blame them. Victor Frankl would say this deprives their lives of meaning;

Karl Marx would say it further removes them from the product of their labor. Regardless, they want someone to blame, and frankly, who can blame them?

This degradation of culture, of society, of trust, should not and cannot be laid entirely at the feet of our forebearers. It is instead, I believe, the fault of human nature. We are selfish. Dozens of cognitive biases and millions of years of evolution have created a mindset in which we are always the hero or the victim, others' intents are nefarious, we judge ourselves by our intent and others by their actions, we want to get ours and reject the commons, sacrifice the long-term for the short-term.

So how do we serve those we blame for our problems? How do we mentor those with a grudge against our clientele? It really comes back to the solution to all of our social and institutional ills: remember the human. Easy to say, hard to do in an increasingly atomized world, where literally trillions of dollars stand to be made by you staying mad.

I didn't listen to the advice of Baby Boomers and Gen X when I was young, so I don't really expect Gen Z or Alpha to listen to me, but I'll nevertheless implore them: just because someone belongs to the same social group you sneer at does not make them worthy of your ridicule. You don't know what that 84-year-old marched for, you don't know the family they raised or the good they did or did not do. And even if they did some questionable things, and even if those actions can be directly tied to your misfortune, no one is just one thing. Except that we are all human and worthy of kindness.

Josh Newby



Truths I've Learned as a Hospice Nurse

By Yolanda DeLoach

A common reaction I get when I tell others that I am a hospice nurse is, "That must be so depressing." But I don't find it depressing. Instead, I see it as an honor to walk with someone through their end-of-life journey.



"I see it as an honor to walk with someone through their end-of-life journey," writes DeLoach | Credit: Getty

My first experience being present at someone's death was prior to me becoming a nurse. A friend, in her late 50s, had terminal lung cancer and was near death. Her young adult son needed a break from vigiling at her bedside. I took his place, held her hand and told her who I was, as she was unresponsive (hearing is believed to be retained up until death).

[Link to original article](#)

*****Permission granted from Next Avenue to reprint article from July 16, 2025*****

New SNAP Work Rules Threaten to Snarl Older Adults in Red Tape

By Molly Snow, AARP

Published November 21, 2025



New work requirements for low-income older adults who rely on federal food assistance are putting people at risk of losing that aid, as states rush to track compliance.

For the first time ever, adults ages 55 to 64 must work or volunteer at least 80 hours a month to qualify for or keep food benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The program supports more than 11 million adults 50-plus.

[Link to original article](#)

The background of the page features a large, stylized purple ribbon that forms a circular shape on the left and a loop on the right. The text is centered within the circular area.

NATIONAL
ALZHEIMER'S
DISEASE
AWARENESS
MONTH

NOVEMBER



“Do More, Feel Better” Program for Senior Centers: Results, What’s Next, & How to Get Involved

Amber Gum, PhD,¹ Mary Jo McKay, MBA,² & Nicole Crawford,¹ DrPH, LCSW

¹Department of Mental Health Law & Policy, University of South Florida

²Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services

What has “Do More Feel Better” accomplished in 2025?

In the [November/December 2024](#) newsletter, we described “Do More Feel Better” (DMFB), a program for older adults with depressive symptoms in which trained older adults (“DMFB Coaches”) help them become more active doing valued and rewarding activities. We have been studying DMFB through a partnership between the University of South Florida (USF) and Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services’ senior centers, as part of a multi-site trial with the University of Washington (UW) and Cornell Weill Medicine.

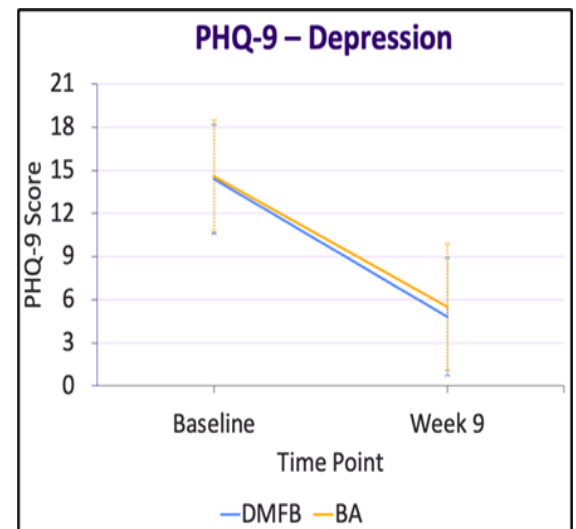
We have almost completed our study, and the results look good! Our Florida-based team enrolled 97 English-speaking and 33 Spanish-speaking older adults into the program (2 more than our goals of 96 and 32, respectively). Clients have completed all their intervention visits and 9-week follow-up assessments. UW and Cornell also met their enrollment targets.

Averaging data across all three sites, we have observed three important findings, shown by the graph to the right (presented by Dr. Patrick Raue of UW at Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies in November):

- 1) Clients’ depressive symptoms improved a lot (from average of ~15 [moderately depressed] to <6 [normal range].
- 2) Clients who received DMFB from Coaches improved just as much as clients who received traditional behavioral activation delivered by master’s level mental health clinicians.
- 3) Improvements were almost identical for English- and Spanish-speaking clients.

Our team also published two manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals showing that:

- 1) DMFB Coaches liked and benefited from being coaches and were able to learn and implement the program well (link [here](#)).





2) Senior center personnel involved in the project believe it meets an important need and should be implemented by aging service organizations, and they provided valuable recommendations about resources needed (e.g., training, funding, access to volunteers, mental health consultant; (link [here](#)).

Lastly, a handful of organizations have contacted the USF, UW, or Cornell study teams to implement DMFB. As a result, there are pilot projects happening across the world, including New York, Peru, and Australia!

What's Next?

The research teams at USF, UW, and Cornell have submitted a grant proposal to the funder, the National Institute of Mental Health. We proposed to work with 54 new senior centers across the U.S. to study the best ways to train and support senior centers to deliver DMFB on their own. We are awaiting review of this proposal.

In the meantime, we are collecting follow-up data from clients, analyzing data and disseminating findings through articles and presentations, and preparing DMFB training materials to be shared more broadly. First, a small number of clients still have 6-month and 9-month follow-up assessments to complete; this information will help us see whether initial improvements are lasting. Second, we will spend the next several months analyzing data and writing reports, in consultation with our Dissemination Advisory Council with representatives from the National Council on Aging, to provide input on dissemination and plans. Third, we are working on polishing our DMFB training materials (e.g., client workbook, coach workbook, training videos, etc.) for wider dissemination.

How Can You Get Involved?

There are three ways you could become involved. To learn more, please email us at domorefeelbetter@usf.edu.

1) Join our newsletter: We will likely send out a newsletter every 3-6 months.

2) Join the follow-up study: Let us know if you would like to be considered for involvement in the follow-up proposal we submitted to NIMH, if funded.

3) Consider your own DMFB pilot: As mentioned above, a few organizations have worked with study team members to set up DMFB in their organizations. These organizations have a staff member who can dedicate part of their time to coordinating the program, access to volunteers who could serve as Coaches, and access to mental health support if more intensive services are needed. Contact us to discuss this further.

Lastly, you are probably already involved in activities that support the goals of DMFB – to help older adults be more engaged in valued and rewarding activities, including physical, social, and enjoyable activities. Thank you for all that you are already doing to help older adults do more and feel better!

Intergenerational Programs: Bridging Hearts, Inspiring Service, Strengthening Community

By Alina Palenzuela, CAP-OM, Chief Marketing & Volunteer Engagement Officer, & Blanca Ceballos, Community Relations Manager, United HomeCare

In an increasingly fragmented society, creating purposeful interactions between younger and older generations is more than a compassionate gesture—it is a vital community priority. Intergenerational programs like United HomeCare’s AVUS Connect® and AVUS Tech Pals® demonstrate that when high school and college students engage in sustained, meaningful service with seniors, communities grow stronger, empathy and understanding deepen, and wellbeing improves across all ages.

THE HEART OF AVUS CONNECT®

Established in early 2021, AVUS Connect was founded by Shawn Martinez as an intergenerational service and volunteer initiative. Inspired by the urgent need to combat senior loneliness and isolation, Shawn envisioned a student-driven volunteer initiative anchored in compassion and fellowship. Even its name —“Avus,” Latin for grandfather— reflects reverence, legacy, and care.

What began as a heartfelt idea quickly evolved into a nationally acclaimed movement. Today, AVUS Connect and AVUS Tech Pals are certified and designated Programs of Distinction by Generations United, and recipients of the President’s Volunteer Service Award. Its leadership has earned widespread recognition, including the 2023 William R. Simms Award for Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy – Group, presented by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (YFP) at their Global Philanthropy Conference in New Orleans, a powerful testament to the program’s vision and impact.

Currently in his junior year as a Posse Scholar at Pomona College in Claremont, California, Shawn continues to lend vision and strategic guidance, championing intergenerational approaches to food insecurity, multigenerational caregiving, and senior isolation nationwide. His journey affirms a timeless truth: one young person with conviction can inspire an entire community to change.



AVUS Connect® Founder Shawn Martinez, Pomona College, the AVUS Connect® and AVUS Tech Pals® presenter at the Generations United Conference, and Blanca Ceballos, Mentor.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTION, REAL IMPACT

AVUS Connect's mission is anything but theoretical—it unfolds in joyful, memorable ways. Student volunteers visit senior living facilities, participate in service days, organize seasonal celebrations, and perform music that uplifts residents and staff alike. A recent Halloween mini-concert, for example, at Broward State Veterans Nursing Home brought entertainment to veterans while increasing young volunteers' awareness of aging needs. These shared moments reduce senior isolation while nurturing empathy, leadership skills, social awareness, and civic responsibility in students.

CASE STUDY #1 | Pickleball4APurpose (Ava Weissman, AVUS Connect volunteer)

Events like Pickleball4APurpose tournaments add another dimension of value. Raising more than \$10,000 this year alone for older adult causes, these intergenerational sporting gatherings prove that recreation, wellness, and philanthropy can coexist meaningfully. Youth players, families, seniors, and sponsors come together not just to compete but to connect, inspire, and support aging adults.

When American Heritage High School student Ava Weissman founded Pickleball4APurpose two years ago, she envisioned far more than a popular sport—she saw a platform for change. As Founder and President, Ava has partnered closely with United HomeCare® and AVUS Connect, uniting students and seniors through clinics, matches, and tournaments that foster friendship, reduce isolation, and promote wellbeing. Managing this program alongside her schoolwork as Co-President of her AVUS Connect® Club, Ava reminds us that winning isn't measured in points but in lives touched.



Ava Weissman, Professor Torres and Bianca Ceballos at the 2025 Pickleball4APurpose Summer Tournament.

CASE STUDY #2 | Youth Advocacy and Storytelling (Bianca Ceballos, AVUS Connect volunteer)

Seventeen-year-old Bianca Maria Ceballos, Co-President and Founder of the AVUS Connect Club at American Heritage High School, is proving that leadership has no age limit. She bridges generational gaps through video calls, tech assistance, interviews, and shared storytelling. Bianca also founded South Florida Golden Lights Documentaries to highlight the stories of inspiring seniors shaping their communities. One of Bianca's interviews featured David Lawrence, Jr., former publisher of the Miami Herald and the Detroit Free Press, and Chair of the Children's Movement of Florida.



Bianca interns with State Representative Marie Woodson to develop a Youth Council in Broward District 105, strengthening civic engagement that benefits youth, older adults, and the broader community. Guided by her conviction that "Life is so much bigger than just ourselves," Bianca embodies the spirit of service. In summer 2025, Ava and Bianca were honored with the Florida Council on Aging's Public Service Award for their outstanding initiatives and enduring commitment to improving the lives of older adults.

EXPANDING THE MISSION: AVUS TECH PALS®

To give technology access to homebound seniors, the AVUS Connect platform was strengthened with a six-year technology grant funded by the Older Americans Act (OAA). Through our technology program, over 80 seniors have received an easy-to-use Claris Companion Tablet with free Wi-Fi included and ongoing tech support. They use these hand-held devices to play games, connect with family and friends through video chat, use telehealth services, listen to music on YouTube, engage via social media, and enjoy many other enriching activities.

The seniors' experience using technology is enhanced by our AVUS Tech Pals volunteers, who connect with them through video calls, phone conversations, and in-home visits — offering companionship, a friendly ear, and meaningful conversation when they are feeling sad, ill, or simply needing support.

A RIPPLE EFFECT OF GOOD

Together, AVUS Connect and AVUS Tech Pals reveal the profound potential of intergenerational service.

- Seniors gain companionship, engagement, joy, and independence.
- Students gain leadership development, empathy, communication skills, and civic identity.
- Communities benefit from healthier aging, stronger relationships, and youth who lead with heart.

Whether recognized by the Florida Council on Aging, National Community Care Corps, Generations United, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, or the President's Volunteer Service Award, each honor affirms what participants already know: these programs heal, uplift, and strengthen community fabric.

Ultimately, AVUS Connect and AVUS Tech Pals prove that intergenerational service is not only possible—it is transformational. When young people and elders learn from, serve, and uplift one another, we do more than build connections... **we shape a future where aging is honored, youth are empowered, and care becomes a shared value that defines community life.**



Opening new worlds, one click at a time: With the guidance of AVUS Tech Pals® volunteers, seniors build confidence, connection, and independence—using technology to stay informed, engaged, and connected to the worlds around them.



Hillsborough County's One-Stop Center Brings Health and Social Services to Wimauma

By Mary Jo McKay, MBA, Nutrition and Wellness Manager, Hillsborough County

Hillsborough County's commitment to improving community health and expanding access to services, through its public-private partnership with Suncoast Community Health Centers, was highlighted at this year's International City and County Management Association (ICMA) Conference, held in Tampa in October. Opened in October 2022, the Wimauma Health and Social Services Center serve as a convenient one-stop location for health, senior, and social services for residents in the Wimauma area.

The Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners identified Wimauma as a community with a critical need for increased access to medical care and social support. In response, Hillsborough County and Suncoast Community Health Centers collaborated to create a centralized facility that reduces barriers to care and improves coordination among service providers.

The center brings together Hillsborough County Health Care Services, including the Healthy Living Program, an Active Senior Center, and an Adult Day Care Center managed by Hillsborough County Aging Services, along with comprehensive medical services provided by Suncoast Community Health Centers. Residents can access adult and pediatric medical and dental care, behavioral health services, optometry, women's health, lab services, and preventive care—all in one location.

In addition to medical services, the center offers wellness and enrichment programs such as group exercise and dance classes, nutrition education, daily in-person activities, and individualized therapeutic and social services for seniors.

A key strength of this partnership is its holistic, integrated approach to care. Case management services help residents connect to vital resources, including food assistance, housing and rental support, employment and job training services, veterans' assistance, disability benefits, and wellness coaching.

By delivering coordinated health, senior, and social services in one accessible location, the Wimauma Health and Social Services Center is improving outcomes and enhancing quality of life for residents—serving as a model for how collaborative partnerships can strengthen communities.





**Honoring Teresa K. Barton,
CEO of Aging True Community
Senior Services and Past Presi-
dent of FASP for nearly three
decades of exceptional leader-
ship and commitment.**

**Congratulations on your
retirement!**

Happy Retirement!



Paying tribute to Darrell Drummond, President/CEO of Council on Aging of St. Lucie Inc. and FASP Immediate Past President for 30 Years of leadership and dedicated service.

Best wishes for a well-deserved retirement.



FASP MEMBERSHIP RATES ARE INCREASING



**BEAT THE DUES INCREASE AND RENEW
BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2025.**

**NEW RATE INCREASE TAKES EFFECT WITH ALL
MEMBERSHIP PAYMENTS AFTER JANUARY 1, 2026.**

	Current Rates through December 31st	NEW RATES - As of January 1st
Individual	\$100	\$125
Organizational	\$300	\$350
Government	\$350	\$400
Corporate	\$600	\$700

FASP represents the full array of direct service providers that serve the aging community in Florida. Its philosophy is that an organization speaking with one collective voice can achieve more positive results than individuals acting alone.

FASP, through leadership, training, networking, and advocacy, strengthens and supports organizations that help older persons.

RENEW at www.fasp.net - Click Membership in left bar - Click Apply or Renew Now!

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call 850-222-3524 or email
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* Happy Holidays! *



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