



Florida Association of  
Aging Services Providers

Volume 96: September/October 2023

## Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

Guest Editors: Jennifer Martinez, Marion Senior Services  
Cathy Pearson, Pasco County Public Services

### Message from the President

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



On a recent Friday, I attended our State Legislative Delegation meeting for our St. Lucie County area.

Our Legislators for this area are Senator Gayle Harrell, Senator Erin Grall, Representative Dana Trabulsy, and Representative Toby Overdorf. I appreciated hearing about all of the important issues our county is facing and the need for the State to provide assistance

both financial and policy driven to improve the conditions in our area.

Dwight Chenette, our AAA Executive Director (PSA9), made a request that our State continue to find funding to help remove seniors off our wait list and into receiving needed services to

[Continued on Page 2](#)

### Table of Contents

<a href="#"><u>President's Message</u></a>	1-3
<a href="#"><u>ACL's Voting Accessibility Resources for Older Adults and People with Disabilities</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>The Value of Senior Centers</u></a>	5-6
<a href="#"><u>The Co-Responder Program for Marion County</u></a>	7-8
<a href="#"><u>Ageism Awareness &amp; Upcoming Events</u></a>	9-10
<a href="#"><u>Thank you Sponsors!</u></a>	11

### This Issue's Sponsors





### Continued from Page 1

remain in their homes and receive critical care when needed. Currently, the size of the wait list continues to grow with more than one hundred fifteen thousand (115,000) eligible seniors waiting for assistance.

I was worried that our Legislators were more concerned if there is sufficient workforce available to provide assistance rather than with the reality that more funding is needed to meet the ever-growing need for assistance. We, as part of Florida Association of Aging Service Providers (FASP), must all work together through this organization and our other senior groups to press upon our Legislators that our seniors need and deserve their support for more funding to address their needs. Clearly, we understand that our senior population make the biggest contribution to the overall financial stability of our State economy. With that in mind, more State funding is justified in addressing senior needs. FASP has been committed over the years, soliciting and providing funds for advocating at the State level for seniors; this is critical as we move forward. The Legislature will be convening early next year, January 2024; it is vital that we participate physically and financially in advocating for support from our Legislators to be sure they are well educated on our local senior needs and appropriate the needed funding.

FASP has a Board Retreat scheduled for the 25th – 26th of October in Safety Harbor. The major emphasis of this retreat will be our organization's direction over the next few years and its' leadership. I, as President of this organization, have been extremely proud and humbled by your support of me to help direct and facilitate our organization's mission. I am excited by the leaders who represent the next generation of FASP ready to lead this group, and I look forward to transferring the gavel to this next group of leaders. I say all of this to bring attention to how some organizations within the senior network have been challenged in transitioning and preparing for the next generation.

The Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) has new leadership under Secretary Michelle Branham and her staff. In discussion with the Secretary, I am convinced that she is committed to advocating, through the Governor's office, greater assistance for our seniors. Additionally, she has spent a great deal of time seeking our input and soliciting our assistance in achieving DOEA's goals.

Unfortunately, due to the current job environment, DOEA has not been immune to the difficulty in finding good, qualified staff to handle the day-to-day administrative duties of their office. As I understand it, there has been at least a thirty to forty (30-40%) percent turnover in critical staff at many state agencies. This even includes agencies that process payments to essential agencies like ours all across the state. No private companies -- or other organizations -- can function at their best without 1/3 of their workforce!

### Continued on Page 3

### Continued from Page 2

Our membership and the AAA's throughout the State have committed to working with DOEA to make sure service needs continue to be performed and that our vendors are paid in a timely fashion. I am pleased that we have been able to work with the Statewide leadership of AAA's (F4A) to ensure continuity and performance by all members of our network. To date, I believe all outstanding invoices have been processed for our lead agencies and vendors!

Finally, I want to mention an ongoing concern I have with the state of our nation as it relates to seniors. I believe we have all participated in seminars and group discussions regarding the subtle but real acts of discrimination against seniors: ageism. From the highest level, federally, to the small groups who make comments and judgement within our communities, we need to be ever vigilant regarding the improper and massively insensitive attitudes of those who suggest that there is an expiration date to our contributions to the greater society.

I continue to be impressed with individuals like Warren Buffet (93 years old); who the business sector leans on for guidance for how our financial markets benefit us all. I am impressed with my father (93 years old) who remembers things I have long since forgotten about my youth and the current events he is observing. Many within our senior network continue to bring great contributions to our current and future success.

To minimize their (our) contributions is a loss for all. As we look to find ways to advance the needs of seniors, please let us not forget, we have more to give as we age and are vital to the success of our futures. Please remember that we all have a part to play in the success of FASP and the overall success of Florida's senior population. Let's be focused on being a part of its' overall success!

*Darrell Drummond*



## ACL's Voting Accessibility Resources for Older Adults and People with Disabilities



The Administration for Community Living (ACL) works alongside disability and aging networks to ensure that older adults and people with disabilities are able to exercise their rights to vote. ACL's programs provide many resources while also working closely with their states and communities to improve access to the voting process.

ACL compiled this page to make it easier for older adults and people with disabilities to find the voting resources they need.

- Voting information for older adults and people with disabilities
  - \* [Vote.gov](#) has information on how to vote, voter registration requirements and deadlines, and locating your state or local election office website.
- [The voting section](#) of the National Disability Rights Network website includes a wide range of voting information for people with disabilities.
- The Southeast ADA Center compiled a [Resource List](#) with information on accessible voting.
- ACL's disability networks also have created a variety of resources for voters with disabilities in their states:
  - \* Florida: [Video discussion on accessible in-person voting](#).
- ACL's State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program may be able to help if a person who lives in long-term care facility, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities, is having difficulty exercising their right to vote.
  - \* [Florida's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program through DOEA](#)

**[Click here to visit ACL's Voting Resources Page](#)**



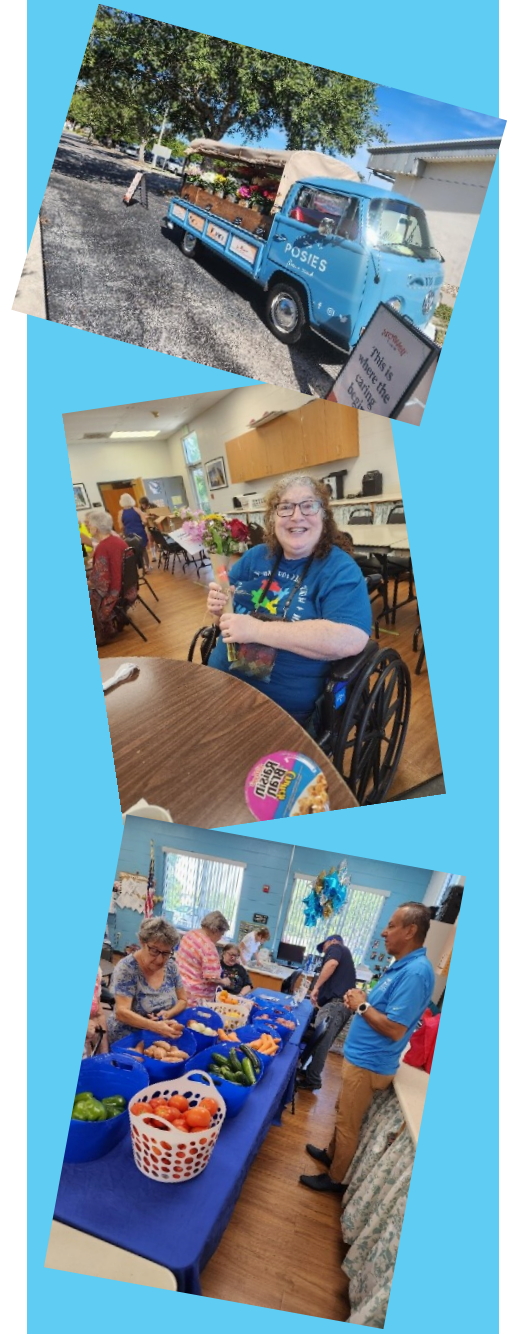
## The Value of Senior Centers

By Allison J. Karaszkievicz, Project Specialist, Pasco County Senior Services Division

Senior citizens often end up isolating themselves, as their loved ones are either working, relocated, or passed away. As seniors continue to age, activities and their abilities change. Unfortunately, this leaves many seniors with a sense of lonesomeness, and they desire to be with others. Currently, seniors enjoy activities conducted at their local Senior Center. These activities consist of traditional activities, such as bingo, cards, and movies. We have also seen that traditional trend change throughout the pandemic and alongside advances in technology.

There is a need to be cognizant of these changes and adapt programming to new trends in senior engagement. Seniors are now asking about new technologies and using it in their everyday life. Some of these new trends include: Online Bingo with various organizations, Uniper "Uconnect" device to bring activities home directly from their television, and utilization of Virtual Pets.

A lack of socialization can distort memory, burden the mental state, and leave them frustrated, often taking it out on others. Therefore, the value of Senior Centers has become more important than ever. Seniors constantly come up with ways to become more socially active within their community. One of the most valuable aspects of having a Senior Center in our community is we can trust that when our loved ones grow older there is a place they can go to enjoy a hot meal, make friends, volunteer, enjoy games, and feel connected to people who are in similar situations. Often, these centers open doors for them to learn of other resources in the community.



**Continued on Page 6**

### Continued from Page 5

Despite the popular belief, many seniors are not dependent on their children to spend time with them, but simply do not know where to go to find people their age or those who enjoy the same activities and resort to what and who they know. The importance of Senior Centers does not stop at just providing our families with an outlet for socialization, but often helps prepare seniors with resources and connections they may need as they age. In addition, the average senior citizen changes with each generation, leaving them feeling disconnected socially from newer and older generations.

Providing a Senior Center is a great place to strike a balance. Senior Centers can adapt like people and develop activities that invite and teach all generations, helping bridge the gap in communication and interests, allowing everyone to find commonalities. One of the greatest strengths Senior Centers provide within the community is independence and a peace of mind.

(All photos have taken place at one of the Pasco County Senior Services Senior Centers).



## The Co-Responder Program for Marion County

By: Jennifer Martinez, Marion County Senior Services

Over the past several years, Marion Senior Services (MSS) and several other agencies have broadened their safety net. Area at-risk seniors who previously tumbled through the gaps of available resources now have more resources available to them thanks to the new and unique collaboration.

The Co-Responder Program for Marion County assists seniors with medical and mental health issues, food insecurity, as well as the strain of caregiving and social isolation by linking them to vital organizations and agencies that can provide them with aid and relief.

The program, a first-of-its-kind in Florida, officially launched in 2020 but gained traction in 2021 when it received crucial funding from Lutheran Services Florida. What initially started out as a joint effort between MSS, Lutheran Services and the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), under the approval of Sheriff Billy Woods, the program now also includes Ocala Fire Rescue (OFR), the Ocala Police Department, the Fifth Judicial Circuit, The Vines, Advenia Care, Hospice of Marion County, the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) of Marion County, Florida Department of Elder Affairs, Interfaith Emergency Services, SMA Healthcare, the Florida Public Guardian Programs, Community Companion Care, AdventHealth Ocala and HCA Florida Ocala Hospital.



The partnering agencies regularly check in with one another to identify seniors in crisis. Seniors who call 911 excessively or who frequently visit emergency rooms when they don't have a real emergency are especially targeted because they strain the emergency response system needlessly.

"We triage and prioritize those who need help the most and keep track of them through case management and a care plan," said Briana Kelley, Ph.D., a human services counselor at MSS.

A paramedicine team, comprised of Ocala Fire Rescue Captain and MSS clinician, visit the seniors in crisis several times a week and delve deep into the core issues affecting them, give them care, and direct them to the proper resources.



### Continued from Page 7

Lately, the team has been dealing with a lot of dementia patients in its large baby boomer population, which can be challenging.

Kelley said there are myriad barriers and deterrents that exist for the county's growing senior population, many of whom don't have family members or a guardian nearby to help them navigate potential resources.

"We identify gaps of service and find ways to meet their needs," said Kelley.

"We figure out ways to keep their quality of life and independence going as long as possible," she added. "If they need to transition, then we do that. If hospice is necessary, then we'll make the referral to hospice. If Alzheimer's training is needed, we make that referral, too."

Sgt. Clint Smith of the MCSO said the agency has benefitted from the partnership, especially after it started looking into the number of 911 calls from a dozen seniors with mental or cognitive health issues who were constantly calling the agency for non-law enforcement matters.



"Those 12 individuals took up 1,330 hours of time from the sheriff's office for non-emergencies in 2021," said Smith. "What we've seen from partnering with Marion Senior Services is an average of a 54% decrease in calls from those 12 individuals for 2022. That's huge for us; that's 700 hours of time we've saved."

Now, when deputies respond to a call that ends up not being a law enforcement issue, Smith said, they act as a referral service and help point the caller in the right direction, hopefully staving off any more unnecessary calls to 911.

"That's the benefit from it; now we can spend time fighting crime and doing the things we're expected to do," said Smith, a 17-year veteran of the MCSO. "It's the right thing to do and it helps the community."





## October 7th, 2023—Ageism Awareness Day



The American Society on Aging's (ASA) Ageism Awareness Day took place on Saturday, October 7, 2023.

**This day is an opportunity to draw attention to the existence and impact of ageism in our society and how we can reframe aging in our communities.**

Visit <https://www.asaging.org/> for more information

## Upcoming Events

### National Caregiver's Month November 2023



**National Family Caregivers Month** – celebrated each November -- is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country.

Celebrating Family Caregivers during National Family Caregivers Month enables all of us to:

- Raise awareness of family caregiver issues
- Celebrate the efforts of family caregivers
- Educate family caregivers about self-identification
- Increase support for family caregivers
- Reduce feelings of isolation

This year's theme is #CaregiversConnect

Visit [Caregiveraction.org](https://www.caregiveraction.org) for more resources and tips for caregivers

## Upcoming Events

Veterans Day 2023 is on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023.

The 2023 federal observation date is Friday, Nov. 10, 2023.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Florida Conference on Aging 2024**  
**August 5-7, 2024 • Hyatt Regency, Orlando, FL**

## FASP is on Social Media—Are You?



**Find our Sponsor on Social Media!**

<https://www.facebook.com/MarionSeniorServices>



<https://www.facebook.com/PascoCounty>



# Thank You Sponsors!



Senior Resource  
ASSOCIATION

*Promoting Independence in our Community*

<https://www.seniorresourceassociation.org/>



Council on Aging  
of St. Lucie, Inc.

<http://www.coasl.com/>



*Together we make community happen.*

<https://volencenter.com/>



EST. 1972

<http://www.coawfla.org/>



<http://agingtrue.org/>



Senior  
Friendship  
Centers

<https://friendshipcenters.org/>



United  
HOMECARE®

*There's just no place like home.*

<https://www.unitedhomecare.com/>



COMMUNITY AGING & RETIREMENT SERVICES, INC.

<https://www.caresfl.org/>



<https://www.marionseniorservices.org/>



<https://agingmattersbrevard.org/>



<https://summithome.net/>



CHAPTERS  
HEALTH® SYSTEM

<https://www.chaptershealth.org/>



Hillsborough  
County Florida

[Hillsborough County Aging Services](https://www.hillsboroughcountysm.org/)



BAY COUNTY  
Council on Aging

<https://www.baycouncilonaging.org/>



[Humana Healthy Horizons](https://www.humana.com/healthy-horizons)



<https://states.aarp.org/florida/>



[Pasco County Public Services](https://www.pascofla.gov/)



[Broward County Elderly & Veterans Services](https://www.browardcountysm.org/)