



Florida Association of
Aging Services Providers

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Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

Guest Editors: John Clark & Josh Newby, Council on
Aging of West Florida, Inc.

Message from the President

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



For better or worse, most times when thinking of how issues are affecting seniors, I turn to my father who is celebrating his 91st birthday this month. In a previous article, I talked about how my family developed a schedule for weekly FaceTime so we could remain connected throughout the COVID pandemic. When vaccinations became available, he was vaccinated in January and

is now scheduled for the booster shot this month. Overall, he has weathered the time with good humor and patience, but I have discovered that from time to time, he reaches out for conversation from his children when he really doesn't have any agenda for the call. I am convinced that the routine he had established for his daily life, the places he normally visited, the people with whom he had regular communication, all

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disappeared.

You don't realize that these things are missing immediately, it's much more subtle. Over time, you recognize that you are isolated and the outside stimulus that you relied on to stay positive and healthy is missing. We have seen incredible new programs come online in the last year to address senior loneliness.

For example, one program now in use allows for activities previously available at senior centers to be offered via Zoom. Additionally, there is a



program that allows seniors to connect and travel to different countries

(tour guide included) from the comfort of their homes. The interactive program allows travelers to communicate with each other and ask questions throughout the trip. These and other programs are a godsend for isolated individuals and has proven to be therapeutic overall for seniors' physical and mental health.

The success of these programs relies on technology; the availability of internet service and the ability of seniors to have access to the internet and computers or smart tablets. On top of that is the need to teach seniors how to use the technology and provide them with support when the technology fails and/or other problems arise. Of course, the key to the success of these programs lies in our ability to provide funding for these projects.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is a major funding grant, approved by Congress, designed to address these types of problems.

The Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) is working with the Area Agencies on Aging (F4A) and local providers throughout the state to put in place programs that will address these and other needs of seniors during this time of recovery. Secretary Richard Prudom has stressed his commitment to make sure that the programs implemented are targeted in a way that maximizes the positive impact on seniors and their caregivers. As a result, he has cautioned all parties to take the necessary time to get these options right and not rush to spend the funds just for the sake of spending. With that in mind, our planning is focused on programs that will be multi-year in their implementation because there is not a hard end date for expending the funds.

I am excited that we have the technology to build a system for the future health of our most vulnerable population and that the entire senior network is pulling in the same direction to get the best product into the system. At some point, my father and all seniors in Florida will return to some form of normalcy with new tools and technology in place to enhance their golden years and position all of us toward a brighter tomorrow.

Darrell Drummond





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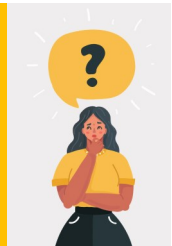
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Planting the Seeds of Grassroots Advocacy

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

It may be difficult to remember now, but not so long ago, when the COVID-19 vaccine rollout had just begun, shots were few and arms were many. Successfully booking a vaccine appointment felt sort of like winning the lottery, and the social topic of conversation was just how difficult it was to navigate the many websites, phone numbers and queues. Many of the shots were going to older, technologically-adept and relatively affluent seniors. These were folks who were of course vulnerable to the disease, but they were not the homebound, low-income, minority elders being touted by the state as the first in line to receive the immunizations.

Locally of course, we knew the challenges our clients faced. Those with family and connections could book an appointment right at 6 AM when the slots opened, thanks to their fast internet, easy-to-read tablet, or family support system. Those living without those resources, however, were frustrated, alienated, confused, and felt left behind by a system that promised to put them first.

At Council on Aging of West Florida, we did what we could to help these folks sign up. Unfortunately, the demand was too great and our staff and resources too small.

We decided to stop fighting with the website and take our righteous fight to the public sphere in the hopes the state administration would notice and challenge and implement changes. We gathered testimonials and sent them to local news stations, who were of course too happy to

help us stir the pot. Local news did recurring segments on the frustrations faced by many, and other news affiliates across the state picked up the story, as well. Twitter became an unconventional tool: we would tweet the stories and quotes to legislators and decision-makers across the state, hoping to inundate them outside of the traditional phone and email platforms.

Over the course of a month, Council on Aging did what we do best—served as a voice for the voiceless we serve. One lonely senior in one small town who couldn't get a shot didn't stand a chance of reaching the state legislature or Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), but if we could bundle up dozens of those stories and use our platforms to signal-boost their needs, that might just do something.

We long said that website-based signup was simply unworkable for many. We advocated for a centralized phone number an older adult could call and be slotted into an available appointment. We advocated for local municipalities to deliver the vaccine to the homebound, instead of counting on them to drive to a site far from home. Slowly, these very changes happened, and slowly, those who needed protection against this virus were receiving it.

We were surprised at how effective this grassroots advocacy was. You probably have issues in your local community that you wish would gain traction, but for whatever reason they do not. We have those issues, too. But using this



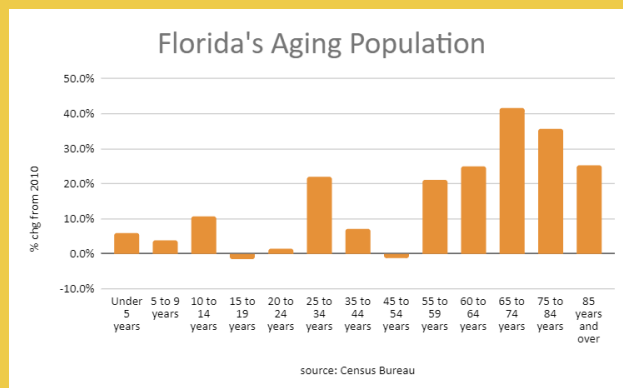
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example as a case study, we can tease out several lessons to implement for next time our clients need their concerns heard:

- If possible, center the need around a current flashpoint topic.
- Do the news's job for them: gather leads, quotes and compelling stories, so that all they have to do is put it all together.
- Use nontraditional communications means: Twitter, fax, a video, anything that is different from the hundreds of irate emails and phone calls they get each day.
- Have your talking points nailed down. You don't want to be caught unprepared when the news or government official does come calling.
- Keep your communication partners updated. This could be the news, a colleague across the state, or your marketing/PR person. The news changes faster than ever. Having an early scoop could help guarantee exclusive coverage.
- Make your choice. This one can be tough. We rely on DOEA and the state for financial support and favorable monitoring. "Biting the hand that feeds you" by criticizing them in public can be a risk, so you have to decide: who are you here to serve and advocate for? Your boldness will generate publicity.
- When successful, thank the folks that made it happen. They will be the ones there for you next time.

Facing the Cost and Challenges of Caregiving in Florida

COVID-19 has highlighted how older Americans are cared for, the special vulnerabilities they face and the challenges families have to confront when making caregiving decisions. [Click here for the full article](#)



Florida likely will continue getting older because a quarter of the state's population will turn 65 by the next presidential election, giving caregiving policies an increasingly political dimension.

Hurricane Preparedness Meal Kit Program

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

Among many worries during a storm or tropical event is being able to provide a meal for yourself or your family. Earlier this year, Gulf Power joined forces with Florida Power & Light (FPL) in a statewide effort to work with Councils on Aging to help the elderly population be ready for a storm.

With the 2021 storm season off to an active start, Gulf Power and FPL kicked off its Hurricane Preparedness Meal Kit program in June to help highlight the importance of being prepared. Kits were provided throughout the state. In Northwest Florida, Gulf Power worked with the Council on Aging of West Florida, Manna Food Bank, Florida Council on Aging and ARC Gateway. The meal kits were provided to existing clients of the Council on Aging of West Florida, who are 60 and older and primarily homebound.

“We are so grateful to the Gulf Power and FPL team for making this possible,” said Josh Newby, marketing director at Council on Aging of West Florida. “Among the food-insecure in the aftermath of severe weather, elder adults rank among the most vulnerable. Many are unable to ambulate, and still others are simply unable to afford 72 hours-worth of food ahead of time. This relief helps address those concerns and ensures that our area’s seniors will be taken care of until help arrives, should the worst happen this hurricane season.”



The hurricane preparedness meal kits included three days of shelf-stable foods for three meals per day, including breakfast, lunch and dinner, along with snacks and water. FPL and Gulf Power partnered with the Florida Council on Aging and local partner agencies.

The Council on Aging of West Florida serves about 2,200 seniors in the area and has an “indirect” impact on about 10,000 caregivers.

“There are so many things you have to focus on in the wake of a tropical event, that having a meal shouldn’t be one, especially for the elderly in our area,” said Sandy Sims, director of external relations for Gulf Power. “Our mission, especially during a storm, is to support our communities where we live and work. Efforts like this are just one way we can try to help our customers be ready for storm season.”

The Gulf Power Foundation has operated for 30 years as an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, partnering and investing in communities throughout Northwest Florida. The Foundation is one of the region’s largest corporate foundations, funded entirely through resources independent of Gulf Power’s customers. Learn more about the Foundation and its quarterly grant program here: <https://www.gulfpowerfoundation.com/>.

Poverty Porn in Senior Care

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

What is poverty porn

If you turned on the television in the early 2000s you have Sarah McLachlan's "In the Arms of an Angel" and images of abused sad dogs burned somewhere in your mind. You may have donated ten cents a day to help a starving child. The use of these images is almost pornographic in that the viewer feels like they should not have seen such intimate and disturbing details. Poverty porn extends beyond images, it also takes place in *imagery* and the stories that we tell.

"Poverty porn is a tactic used by nonprofits and charity organizations to gain empathy and contributions from donors by showing exploitative imagery of people living in destitute conditions," CNN, 2016

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If it gets donations and funds to make services happen, **what's the harm?** Poverty porn presents the issue as one that is too large to face a donor may feel that their contribution could never make a difference. It is exploitative and embarrassing for the individual pictured and those in the same demographic. Poverty porn further reinforces stigma about the group pictured. These images may garner donations, but they may make life harder for those you serve.

An image that poverty porn creates that is harmful to the nonprofit itself is that of **chronic dependance**. This is the idea that your clients are so desperate that they will always depend on you, that you are not able to make long term changes in anyone's lives- bringing the impact of your organization into question.



Charity is not advocacy. "Friend-raising" is the idea that fundraising and other community efforts bring friends to the agency, people who genuinely love what you do and want to share it with others. These donors become advocates for your cause. Those happy about their donation feel proud and want to share what they have done with others who then become exposed to your cause and may donate or become involved in other ways.

To donate to a poverty porn campaign is to pay money quickly to make it go away. This donation (often a small one at that) is hastily made to absolve the individual of guilt felt upon seeing the image. These are not donors who will actively choose to look at your organization again and face the issue a second time. Retaining donors has a stronger return than bringing in new donors, and poverty porn negates that.

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Consent is empowerment. The goal of many of our programs is to empower those we serve. We must provide a space for them to tell their own stories. In this case, consent is empowerment. Many of us deal with HIPPA concerns and must get media release forms from our clients, but it shouldn't stop there. Consent is not a one-time signature. Consent is not enough- we must ensure comfort and remind them that they can walk away at any time.

Often in fundraising and media we gather information and photos from an individual and leave them be. Imagine not knowing where your photo is going to end up, or if it will even be a flattering depiction. Continued consent includes informing the client exactly where their likeness will be used.



Everyone wants to make a positive difference. Often our clients are honored to share their story and want to give back to the organization. Share with them the impact of their participation. Tell them the campaign you are using their photos for, or the grant that their success story is a part of. Don't just steward those who donate due to these stories, steward the storyteller. Return to them after a successful campaign and share the good that they have made possible.

When it comes to seniors, it is easy to tell stories of isolation, loneliness, and frailty. Avoid exploitative depictions of clients through telling stories broadly - only add tragic details that are necessary to the story. Show positive elements to combat the dark themes.

Don't tell us another story of a lonely senior, abandoned all week, to be checked on once by the Meals on Wheels volunteer. Tell us about the joy felt by the senior each week when their meals and friend stop by and the way that it has changed the volunteer's life. Our work is intended to provide independence and dignity in the final years of life, take time to ensure that the image you craft of those you serve solidifies their dignity.



Where's my money?

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

Buried deep in the American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021, is a section of particular importance to lead agencies and other non-profits that assist with the elderly. Appendix 7 details the plan's funding areas for aging caregivers of persons with disabilities. Seven months later, many local organizations are asking, "Where's my money?" Well, it's in the mail.



Of course, the answer is more complicated than that. We'll get there in a minute, but first—what is broadly promised?

- About \$47 billion in housing assistance
- \$5 billion in utility assistance
- \$750 million for nutrition programs under the Older Americans Act
- \$12.7 billion Medicaid Home and Community Based Services increase, including behavioral health
- \$450 million for nursing homes and facilities to target COVID protection and mitigation
- The law provides funding to create a new technical assistance center for grandfamilies and kinship families to provide training, technical assistance, and resources to government programs, community-based organization, and Tribes and Tribal organizations that serve grandfamilies and kinship families in which the primary caregiver is an adult age 55 or older or the child has one or more disabilities
- \$7.6 billion in funding for Community Health Centers to respond to COVID-19.

Of the above, approximately \$106.7 million is expected to be distributed to Florida, with no timeline to spend the money down. According to Florida DOEA Secretary Richard Prudom, the money should be broken down as follows:

- \$56.6 million associated with nutrition services
- \$34.7 million for supportive services, specifically mental health and socialization emphasizing technology
- \$12 million for caregiver services and \$3 million for preventative health.

"We are scheduled to receive another \$128 million specifically for addressing the needs of individuals who are living at home and have issues living at home with their activities of daily living, caregivers, and providing a meal," said Florida DOEA Secretary Richard Prudom. "That significant funding is designed to help them age in place and avoid becoming a Medicaid beneficiary down the road."



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According to the Secretary's presentation to the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee, DOEA is also requesting money from state general revenue funding:

- \$1.4 million for continued work on e-CIRTS
- \$505,000 for Guardianship Office
- \$33.8 million transfer to AHCA the PACE Program
- \$1.4 million IT Compliance (bandwidth, hardware, infrastructure upgrade and VOIP upgrade)

"We are taking this opportunity to ask the AAAs, 'Where do you see that this money can be invested?'," said Prudom. "We don't just want to spend the money. We want to invest. There's no time pressure."

While that lack of a timeline certainly lends itself to strategic distribution and mindful application, it also means that there is no expected date for funds disbursement. The grant itself has an end date of 2024, but Prudom states that is only because the grant system requires an end date and that was the furthest away the system would accept.

So like we said, the check is in the mail.





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