The Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) is committed to providing nutritious meals to Florida seniors and spreading awareness of an issue that is not discussed nearly enough – senior hunger. This September, we are recognizing Hunger Action Month and are proud to partner with Feeding Florida to advocate, volunteer, and help bring awareness about hunger and the statewide impact it can have.

According to Feeding America, 3.1 million people across the nation face food insecurity. Unfortunately, our own numbers in Florida have grown since Hurricane Michael made landfall as a Category 5 Hurricane last year. The storm caused substantial damage and affected many families and communities in Florida. The devastation left many without shelter, power, water, and food. In a response, DOEA gathered with representatives from Feeding Florida, other state agencies, and non-profit organizations to focus on immediate food procurement and accessibility for all persons affected by the storm.

In a unified effort, DOEA and our partners established a Long-Term Feeding Task Force to focus on meeting the critical needs for meals and resources in the newly devastated communities. The task force serves as an opportunity to break down interagency silos to better assist Floridians and ensure all food resources are being used in the most efficient way. Representatives from each agency and non-profit are able to sit together and discuss what resources they have and what their constituents need most, especially following an emergency event like Hurricane Michael.

Since the first gathering, DOEA has expanded the partnership, attended community meetings to share feeding solutions, and produced materials that spread awareness of multi-agency resources for the public to combat senior hunger. This information sharing has been a cost-free way to connect more Floridians who experience food insecurity to services and resources. DOEA will continue collaborating and communicating openly with our partners to ensure no agency is working in a silo but rather communicating to support each other in the most effective and appropriate ways, so all Floridians are able to live and live well. Ultimately, our priority is to ensure all seniors are able to age well and live well, and access to appropriate and affordable nutrition is critical to meet that goal. As we all know, many seniors are only one meal away from a crisis.

We implemented another food assistance innovation last September – just before Michael hit. We established a Disaster Recovery Reserve, in consultation with the U.S. Administration for Community Living, that obligates Florida’s 11 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) to designate a predetermined number of Older Americans Act funds for serving elders by a President-declared disaster. The Disaster Recovery Reserve helped many clients who were greatly impacted by Hurricane Michael’s destructive path. The AAAs that house the counties in the President’s disaster declaration requested approval from DOEA to use the established Disaster Recovery Reserve funds.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
EDITOR’S NOTE SEPTEMBER

Allison Burtoft
Editor-in-Chief

As the days begin to cool down in Florida, time seems to move more quickly. Each fall provides many opportunities to stay busy for seniors since it is still fairly warm outside and there are several activities happening throughout the state.

September and October are quite busy months among seniors, staff at the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), and senior advocacy groups.

DOEA is currently working on the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) focusing specifically on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias to plan and create your Livable Florida. Learn more about the SHIP and check out the new Livable Florida logo on page 12.

During September, you can celebrate the opportunity to spend time with your grandchildren in recognition of Intergenerational Month. Learn more on page 16, where we have events and opportunities listed for you.

During October, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) recognizing Residents’ Rights Month. During this time, we acknowledge the work of Ombudsman Program volunteers and honor long-term care facility residents. You can find more information on the incredible work LTCOP does on pages 6 and 7.

In addition to these important recognitions, we would like to highlight an important day and recognition week for many seniors: Falls Prevention Awareness Day and National Employ Older Workers Week.

Learn more about Falls Prevention Awareness Day, and find a 2019 Falls Free Florida event near you on pages 13 and 14. On page 19, learn more about National Employ Older Workers Week, whether you qualify for SCSEP, and find out more about the program from DOEA staff.

And finally, October 15 marks the beginning of the annual Medicare Open Enrollment period, which runs through December 7. The SHINE Program can provide guidance while navigating questions surrounding Medicare, and unbiased SHINE counselors always have your best interests in mind. See more on page 10.

Though the weather cools down just a bit, things stay just as busy during the fall here in Florida. I hope this issue of Elder Update provides information to help you navigate all the events going on during this busy time of year.

SUDOKU

There is only one valid solution to each Sudoku puzzle. When you start a game of Sudoku, some blocks will be pre-filled for you. You cannot change these numbers in the course of the game. Each column must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same column of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Each row must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same row of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Each block must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9, and no two numbers in the same block of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Good luck!

Solution found on page 10.

Printed using Brain Bashers Sudoku brainbashers.com
**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**AMERICAN ARCHIVES MONTH**

Beth Golding, State Archivist
Florida Department of State

Have you visited your local archives lately? If you are looking to research your family history, the growth of your community, or even find out what your street looked like 100 years ago, October might be a great time to visit!

American Archives Month is celebrated nationwide every October, highlighting the enduring value of historical records and fostering collaborations between archivists and citizens in preserving and accessing historical records.

Florida archives statewide join in the celebration each year, and the Society of Florida Archivists celebrates by highlighting interesting items and collections from archives all around Florida on its Archives Month webpage.

The State Archives of Florida celebrated Archives Month 2018 with the theme Focus on Florida and created a two-sided poster featuring Florida’s oldest known photographic image, including a history of photography as illustrated in the State Archives’ collections. If you would like a commemorative poster, contact the Archives.

The State Archives has lots more planned for the 2019 Archives Month celebration. The theme, Tales From the Archives, will feature public events and programs focused on Halloween and the historical narratives found in archival records. In addition to extended research hours, the State Archives will host tours, family history research presentations, and photography and film presentations and exhibits. This year, the State Archives is introducing the Oral Traditions Collection project where you can share your local Florida legends for preservation at the State Archives.

If you want to join the celebration or just do some research, stop by the State Archives or your local archives, or see if the records you are looking for are available on the web. The State Archives of Florida makes hundreds of thousands of historical documents and photographs available on Florida Memory. Many other archives around Florida and worldwide have digitized materials from their collections and made them available online as well. Take a look or let us know how we can help! Contact the State Archives of Florida at 850-245-6719 or by email at archives@dos.myflorida.com.

**IN MEMORIAM: RUTH LOVEJOY**

Executive Director of Elder Services of Okaloosa County

Nancy Brown
Elder Care Services of Okaloosa County

Elder Care Services of Okaloosa County is sad to share that they recently lost former Executive Director, Ruth Roberta Lovejoy. Lovejoy was age 93 and passed away on May 13, 2019, at Twin Cities Hospital in Niceville, Florida, surrounded by family and friends. The majority of her 93 years of life was spent loving and serving her family and her community, including the particularly elderly residents of Okaloosa County, Florida.

Beginning in 1977, Lovejoy served as the Executive Director of Elder Care Services of Okaloosa County, formerly known as the Okaloosa County Council on Aging. Through her ingenuity and hard work, two unused hospitals in the community were converted into congregate living facilities to serve the elderly. The first, Twin Cities Pavilion, opened in 1981; the second, Crestview Manor, opened in 1982. In addition to the Meals on Wheels program, the Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative, and Home Care for the Elderly program, Lovejoy spearheaded the incorporation of Okaloosa Coordinated Transportation in 1988 to provide needed public transportation for the elderly and disabled in the community. Ruth Lovejoy’s life was an incredible and inspiring journey.

Among the many unsolicited but well deserved honors bestowed on Lovejoy were her 1995 induction to the Okaloosa County Women’s Hall of Fame as its first “contemporary” member, and the Christus Medicus Award presented in 2001 by Bishop Ricard for her then 30 years of pioneering efforts in developing ways to keep the elderly independent in their homes and when necessary moving them into dignified assisted living arrangements encouraging them to live meaningful lives. In 2004, she also received from Governor Jeb Bush the Governor’s Points of Light Award in recognition of her service to her community.

Ruth Lovejoy had an incredible impact on her community and will be dearly missed by those at Elder Care Services of Okaloosa County.
How to Reduce Hospitalization in People With Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias

Nicolette Gomez, MLS
Lina Garcia, MD
University of Miami
Miller School of Medicine

Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) are common illnesses in the elderly that cause functional decline and require caregiver assistance. Loved ones must consider how to cope with all corresponding diseases arising from old age, as well as the cognitive and behavioral problems associated with individuals with dementia. Studies have shown patients with ADRD have a 41 percent greater chance of being hospitalized than a healthy adult. It is important that caregivers are educated on how to prevent hospitalization and keep their loved ones as happy and healthy as possible.

So how does one help reduce hospitalization in people with dementia? It all comes down to communication. With older age come certain chronic medical diseases that co-exist with the dementia. The most common reasons for hospitalizations in dementia patients include syncope/falls, heart disease, gastrointestinal disease, pneumonia, and delirium. Cultivating a strong relationship with your primary care physician is key. The ability to communicate effectively with your loved ones’ care providers can help alert them to proceed with interventions. Keeping their physician informed of changes in health and behavior helps to initiate prevention of the common medical causes of hospitalization in older adults with dementia. As the caregiver it may be wise to ask whether their physician has alternative ways, such as through medical websites and email, to communicate with them and their staff. This can be a more effective way to get answers quickly.

At least 85 percent of people with dementia have one or more chronic conditions, and this is the greatest risk factor for hospitalization. Complications on these co-morbidities result in hospitalization, but some of them are manifested as confusion, acute and marked cognitive decline, and agitation. Caregivers play an important role in identifying these symptoms and avoiding a hospitalization with adequate ambulatory care. Changes in behavior should be an alarm to caregivers. First try to identify the cause of the problematic behavior, as changes in their routine and environment can trigger behavioral problems; use strategies that can help reduce this behavior. Distraction is a very important technique, so take the patient on a walk, listen to music, look at photo albums, or ask them to help you with a household chore.

If your loved one is still agitated, contact her/his primary care physician to have blood work, urinalysis, or any test that can rule out an infection or condition that can be treated at home. If the patient is at risk of falling, adjust the environment to avoid falls and have them use a walker or a wheelchair.

Ensure good hygiene is practiced if the patient suffers from urinary incontinence. Make sure urinary retention is not an issue, and keep the patient well hydrated. Do not change her/his medications without consulting the treating doctor. Each patient is different, and what may be good for you may not be good for your loved one. If hospitalization is imminent, let the physicians at the hospital know about the diagnosis of dementia and bring a list of current medications.

Take your loved one to routine check-up visits with his or her doctor. If their chronic illnesses are well controlled, the risk of hospitalization decreases. Educate yourself on behavioral strategies to reduce agitation and engage with a support group in your area. Get to know the resources available in the community that specialize in dementia, like the Alzheimer’s Association, or contact your closest Memory Disorder Clinic.

The state of Florida has designated and funded 16 Memory Disorder Clinics that provide comprehensive assessments, diagnostic services, and treatment for people with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.

Collaborative care models between primary care settings and caregivers have shown an improvement in health care and quality of life for both patients and caregivers. It is important to promote strategies that caregivers can implement to avoid hospitalization, focus on health issues that can be managed with regular outpatient care, and increase awareness of early interventions that will prevent complicated health problems and unnecessary hospitalizations.

To find a Memory Disorder Clinic near you, visit elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/alz/clinicmap.pdf.
Understanding Florida Guardianship

Sherri Graham, President
Florida State Guardianship Association

This is a common scenario in Florida: Siblings are caring for an incapacitated parent, but one lives out of town and has a career. Another is local but has a family and full-time job. The third is disabled and incapable of giving proper care to the loved one. Everyone devotes as much care and time as possible to the parent, but it isn’t enough.

That is where a professional guardian can step in. However, the process can seem daunting.

You may go through a similar situation one day soon. If so, knowing the guardianship system can help you avoid added stress during an already difficult time. To help you prepare, let’s examine some of the terminology you will hear.

What Is Guardianship?
The legal proceeding in the circuit court in which a guardian is appointed to exercise the legal rights of an incapacitated person. A guardian is the individual appointed by the judge to exercise the personal and/or property rights of the person who has been determined to be incapacitated.

INCAPACITATED: Anyone who is either a minor or who has been determined by the court to lack the ability to manage property or their own health and safety needs.

WARD: Legal term for someone for whom a guardian has been appointed.

GUARDIAN OF THE PERSON: Exercises the personal rights delegated by the court.

GUARDIAN OF THE PROPERTY: Exercises the property rights delegated by the court.

NON-PROFESSIONAL OR FAMILY GUARDIAN: A person who has given services to less than three persons.

PROFESSIONAL GUARDIAN: A person who has received compensation for services to two or more non-related individuals under guardianship.

PUBLIC GUARDIAN: Represents persons under guardianship who are indigent or have no family willing to be the guardian.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE: This is a committee of three that a judge appoints to determine whether a person is incapacitated and should be under guardianship. The three are mental health professionals such as a doctor, psychologist, and a qualified layperson.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES: Documents that dictate your medical and asset treatment desires in case you become incapacitated. Completing these means that a guardian may not be needed at all. Advance directives are documents such as the following:

- Durable Power of Attorney,
- Healthcare Surrogate, and
- Wills and Living Wills.

There are several ways to further educate yourself about guardianship in Florida. The Florida State Guardianship Association is one:

- floridaguardians.com
- (800) 718-0207

Office of Public & Professional Guardians, which regulates, disciplines, registers, and educates professional guardians, and appoints public guardians:

- OPPGinfo@elderaffairs.org
- Information: (850) 414-2381
- Complaints: (855) 305-3030

The guardianship process is thorough and works well for those in need. Knowing the correct terminology is a big first step that should help you hit the ground running.

Department of Elder Affairs and Guardianship

ROLE: While the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) operated the public guardian program through statewide contracts with Offices of Public Guardian, prior to 2016, DOEA had little or no regulatory oversight over professional guardians. The guardianship office maintained the registration files of the professional guardians and administered the competency exam required to become a professional guardian. In 2016, the Legislature expanded the authority of the Department of Elder Affairs’ guardianship office, now named the Office of Public and Professional Guardians (OPPG), following complaints across the state alleging wrongdoing by professional guardians. The new law tasked OPPG with investigating complaints against professional guardians and enacting appropriate discipline. These actions are administrative only, and the most severe action DOEA can take is to file an Administrative Complaint against the guardian to revoke their registration (“license”) to act as a guardian. This complaint is filed with the Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) and is a lengthy, months-long process – or years-long if there is an appeal.

PROCEDURES: When OPPG receive a legally sufficient complaint about a professional guardian that, if true, would be a violation of Florida guardianship laws (Chapter 744), it is referred for investigation. Because DOEA is not an investigatory body, it entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Clerks of Courts throughout the state, known as the Clerk of Courts’ Statewide Investigative Alliance, to fully investigate the complaints. These investigators have Inspector General status, have specialized training related to guardianship, and provide independent and objective investigative reports on their findings. OPPG then reviews the findings and acts appropriately within the confines of the authority granted within Florida Statutes. Allegations can be unfounded, unsubstantiated, or substantiated, and resulting discipline is prescribed in Florida law and ranges from a letter of concern or requiring additional education and training to suspension or revocation of the guardian’s registration through DOAH.
Angelique Witmer
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

“I never thought I would live through a situation like this with both parents having dementia,” shares a family member.

“The room was horrible. My dad was in very bad shape and smelled like excrement. We had to buy new clothes just to get rid of the smell. This should not be happening to anyone, especially someone living with dementia in a nursing home. My dad was living in an isolated, dark room, separated from my mom. A well-taken care of pet lives better than my dad was living.”

Most of us cannot imagine what it would be like if we or one of our loved ones were to develop dementia. We hope it does not affect us or our families. We hope that if we are affected, we can continue to live with dignity and respect and be near our loved ones.

For over a year, a family spread across several states struggled to cope with both of their parents living with dementia in a Florida long-term care facility. Due to concerning conditions in the facility, one family member wanted to help her parents move into a closer facility so she could regularly visit and monitor their care. Both parents had Powers of Attorney making care decisions for them. Because the Powers of Attorney could not agree on care decisions, the parents were separated against their wishes. The father remained in a Florida long-term care facility, and the mother moved out of state to be closer to family.

The Ombudsman Program became aware of the how the couple came to be separated against their wishes after an elder called the Program hotline several times each day asking for her husband and seeming confused and upset when told her husband was not available. The ombudsman was able to speak with the elder’s family and learned the husband had given out the Ombudsman Hotline number as his personal phone number.

The family member did not know where to turn for help. It broke her heart to see her mother pining for her father each day. Often, in the middle of the night, her mother would fully dress and announce, “I’m leaving; I must see my husband.” She did not understand when family reminded her that she could not leave. During the couple’s daily phone call, they each made promises to visit without realizing how great the distance between them. When no visit came, conflict sometimes arose between the couple, who did not understand the separation was not under their control.

Ombudsmen communicated with the family for several months in support of the couple’s rights and wishes. Ombudsman Cyndi Floyd noticed the resident seemed to clearly know what he wanted.

“He was perfectly capable of giving consent and knew he wanted to live with his wife,” says Cyndi.

Cyndi’s advocacy was initially opposed by some family members.

“They seemed to feel having Power of Attorney was the final word in this resident’s life and the rights of the resident had little to do with anything. They thought they could make any decision they wanted and if the resident didn’t like it – well, too bad,” said Cyndi.

Yet, Cyndi persisted in efforts to help the resident reunite with his wife.

“They were close to giving up,” Cyndi stated. “If they hadn’t gotten in touch with us, they would have given up.”

Due largely to Cyndi’s tenacity, the couple were reunited and now enjoy living together in a long-term care facility outside of Florida.

“I am so thankful for the Ombudsman Program’s dedicated work and for the mighty Cyndi!” the family member shared. “If it hadn’t been for her and her determination and her personality it wouldn’t have happened,” wrote a family member.
“The resident’s right to choose where to live is an important right. This case shows how the Ombudsman Program can dramatically impact people’s lives,” Cyndi says.

Cyndi attributes her 14 years of advocating for long-term care residents to the satisfaction that comes from seeing positive impacts and successful outcomes for residents and their loved ones.

“As a retired RN, I’ve never learned how to not be service oriented. I was retired for a short period but got bored. I wanted to remain in service to my community,” Cyndi reflects.

Over her years in the program, Cyndi has served as chairman, and for the last decade, she has mentored nearly every ombudsman in the Mid & South Pinellas Council.

When asked what changes could be made to significantly improve long-term care residents’ quality of care, Cyndi does not hesitate in sharing her support for better wages for support staff who provide most of the care and assistance to residents.

“The most significant issue facing long-term care is the need for dedicated and compassionate nurses’ aides. Nurses’ aides are paid very little for the tasks they perform. As a result, sometimes candidates may not be the best fit for a job caring for our elders in long-term care facilities. Better pay would lure more qualified candidates into the field and reduce staff turnover. As it stands, some aides are not dedicated to the mission of caring for our elders – it’s just a job to them. Particularly in nursing homes, we need staff who genuinely care about residents,” says Cyndi.

As a long-term care ombudsman, Cyndi is trained to identify barriers to residents’ quality of life and care. There are currently only about 310 volunteer long-term care ombudsmen serving over 192,000 long-term care beds in Florida. While Cyndi recognizes the need for more long-term care ombudsmen, she carries an honest message for anyone thinking of becoming a volunteer with the Program.

“Being an ombudsman requires a lot of you, but it is very rewarding,” Cyndi says. “Many people living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities have no one to speak up for them. You can be the voice to advocate for better care and security for these elders. I see very few visitors in facilities. I’m thrilled when family members visit – especially in memory care units. Residents may have family, but often they don’t visit enough. Having regular visitors definitely makes a difference in the care residents receive.”

In addition to advocating for elders in her community, Cyndi helps with a summer bridge reading program aimed at helping first and second graders hone their reading skills. As a member of a church senior planning committee, Cyndi helped coordinate seminars about resources and services for seniors.

As Cyndi continues advocating for others in her community, the couple she helped reunite are now sharing precious moments together – while they still remember each other. They and their loved ones will not soon forget her dedicated service to them.

A family member shares, “I think finding this Program was divine intervention because he kept telling my mother your number was his phone number. If it hadn’t been for the Ombudsman Program, my parents would still be separated. Cyndi fought through opposition to help my parents live out their lives together. I am so happy with Cyndi. Without her, I don’t know what would have happened.”

As the family settles into a new chapter of their lives, they reflect on what they have learned from the experience of both parents living with dementia in a long-term care facility.

“When your loved one is in long-term care, it’s important to have a lot of conversations to learn what the care is like and find out what services are out there. Talk to the administration, staff, other residents, and their families. Check on your family.”

The Florida Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, administratively housed at the Department of Elder Affairs, seeks to improve the quality of life and care for all Florida long-term care residents. Learn more by calling 1-888-831-0404 or by visiting ombudsman.myflorida.com. Like us on Facebook.

The Department of Elder Affairs supports the authority of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program to independently advocate for the health, safety, welfare, and rights of long-term care residents. Consequently, the views and opinions expressed by the Office may not represent the official policy or position of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs or its employees.
The dedicated volunteers of the Florida Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program were asked to share local stories highlighting how a resident was helped by their work. The stories, submitted from all over the state, are bound together by residents who have a better quality of life and increased quality of care due, in part, to the dedicated efforts of volunteer ombudsmen.

**FIRST COAST SOUTH**
Facility staff opened packages and personal letters without a resident’s consent. The local ombudsman discovered the facility had a policy to open pharmacy packages that were not ordered from the in-house pharmacy. The ombudsman witnessed the resident open some packages in front of staff and noted the packages did not contain any medication. The facility then changed its policy to ensure that a resident be present when suspected pharmacy packages are opened.

**WEST CENTRAL**
A resident’s wheelchair went missing. The local ombudsman advocated for the facility to replace the wheelchair. The resident had also experienced billing issues and complained that staff discussed their financial information in front of others. The ombudsman suggested staff be trained on respecting residents’ privacy and advocated for the resident to the billing manager. Soon after, the resident was relieved to receive a new wheelchair and have their billing concerns resolved.

**NORTH CENTRAL**
Facility staff opened packages and personal letters without a resident’s consent. The local ombudsman discovered the facility had a policy to open pharmacy packages that were not ordered from the in-house pharmacy. The ombudsman witnessed the resident open some packages in front of staff and noted the packages did not contain any medication. The facility then changed its policy to ensure that a resident be present when suspected pharmacy packages are opened.

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Like us on Facebook or visit us at ombudsman.myflorida.com.

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Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs Celebrates Legislative Accomplishments

R. Steven Murray  
Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs

On its 30th anniversary, the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs continues to be the premier point of entry for Florida veterans to access earned services, benefits, and support. The agency’s budget resulting from the recently concluded 2019 Florida Legislative Session was signed into law recently by Gov. Ron DeSantis and continues its legacy of excellence.

“I’m proud of Governor DeSantis, our Cabinet, and Legislature in supporting FDVA and the 1.5 million veterans of our state,” said Danny Burgess, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. “Together, we will work to ensure Florida continues to lead the charge as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.”

The agency operates a network of seven state veterans’ homes and provides statewide outreach to connect Florida’s more than 1.5 million veterans with their earned services, benefits, and support.

The Legislature approved an agency budget of approximately $132 million for the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2019. More than $120 million comes from trust funds established to support the agency. The remaining $12 million comes from general revenue.

The budget supports the daily operations of Florida’s six state-run veterans’ nursing homes and one assisted living facility. These facilities provide essential services and care to veterans throughout Florida.

Supporting Florida’s Veterans in Their Communities

The budget supports the daily operations of Florida’s six state-run veterans’ nursing homes and one assisted living facility. These facilities provide essential services and care to veterans throughout Florida.

- $1,741,940 for 21 registered nurses and senior certified nursing assistants to keep adequate staffing levels in compliance with mandated minimum daily staffing requirements for skilled nursing, direct care full-time equivalent employees within the nursing units in each veterans’ home.
- $739,164 in the Other Personal Services (OPS) and $4,815 in the HR Assessment Appropriation Categories. This will allow the department to hire approximately 45 additional OPS employees to support the State Veterans’ Homes direct care requirements and pay for their group health insurance coverage.
- $1,136,000, to support the replacement and purchase of furniture and medical/non-medical/recreational equipment necessary for the daily operations of the State Veterans’ Homes.
- Operating Capital Outlay Category – $1,094,300 from the Operation and Maintenance Trust Fund to replace furniture and old or obsolete medical and non-medical equipment that has reached or exceeded its useful life.
- Expenses Category – $41,700 from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund to purchase recreational equipment and furnishings that improve the quality of life for the resident veterans.

Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans’ Domiciliary Home in Lake City:
- $260,000 for interior bathroom upgrades for residential rooms.

Emory L. Bennett State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Daytona Beach:
- $160,000 for painting of interior spaces, the replacement of heat pumps regulating room temperatures and upgrade to the parking lot lighting system.

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Land O’ Lakes:
- $215,000 for the replacement of heat pumps, mechanical pumps, cooling towers, and hot water tanks regulating the building’s air and water temperature.

Alexander “Sandy” Nininger State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Pembroke Pines:
- $240,000 for interior bathroom upgrades for residential rooms, and the replacement of a heat pump and air handlers which regulate building temperatures.

Clifford C. Sims State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Panama City:
- $210,000 for the installation of underground drainage pipes around the property, replacement of fan coil units helping regulate temperature, and the replacement of ceiling tiles in common areas throughout the facility. $85,000 has also been allocated for a replacement resident transport vehicle.

Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Port Charlotte:
- $270,000 for the replacement of the home’s hot water heaters and replacement of copper water piping throughout areas of the home. $85,000 has also been allocated for a replacement resident transport vehicle.

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans’ Nursing Home in St. Augustine:
- $200,000 for painting of interior spaces and replacement of air handler units throughout the veterans’ home.

Ardie R. Copas State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie:
- The budget provides continued funding for the completion of the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie. The 120-bed skilled nursing facility is scheduled to open in 2020.

Lake Baldwin State Veterans’ Nursing Home in Orlando:
- The 112-bed skilled nursing facility, which previously had been a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs community living center, is scheduled to open in 2020. Funding for annualization and start-up operational costs are included in the budget.
SECRETARY'S MESSAGE… CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We approved the request and quickly enabled the funds needed to serve impacted clients. Many seniors received services after the storm, like delivered food and supplies, transportation, debris removal, fuel purchases for generators, and case management used for call-downs to verify client safety and assignment needs. While we did not plan to utilize the Disaster Recovery Reserve so soon after inception of the innovation, it proved to be a useful and powerful tool that will continue to help Floridians in the coming years.

During the month of September, Floridians are encouraged to spread the word and take action to help seniors facing food insecurity. Unfortunately, many people are just one meal away from a crisis. Our goal as a Department is to bring awareness to the ongoing issue of senior hunger and help get nutritious meals to where they are most needed. This Hunger Action Month and beyond, I encourage you to volunteer with organizations like Feeding Florida or your local food bank to make a difference that could change a life.

For more information about the Department of Elder Affairs and available food assistance programs, please visit elderaffairs.org or call the statewide toll-free Elder Helpline at 1-800-963-5337.

MEDICARE OPTIONS ABOUND DURING OPEN ENROLLMENT

Pene Miller
SHINE Program
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Medicare’s Open Enrollment Period occurs each year from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. This period provides a window of opportunity for making changes in a beneficiary’s current Medicare coverage.

“Annual Notice of Change” letters are sent near the end of September, describing any changes in benefits, premiums, networks, or service areas. It is very important to read through these changes, as they may greatly affect a beneficiary’s health or drug costs for the coming year. During Open Enrollment, beneficiaries should evaluate their coverage and make plan adjustments to better meet their needs. Any changes made during Open Enrollment are effective January 1.

Let’s review the options available to all Medicare beneficiaries during this period.

Stay in Original Medicare
Those enrolled in Original Medicare have nationwide coverage for inpatient (Part A) and outpatient (Part B) services. Through private insurers, beneficiaries may also enroll in prescription drug coverage (Part D) as well as a Medicare Supplement Plan (Medigap) which bridges the gaps associated with Original Medicare. Those cost gaps include copays, co-insurance, deductibles, Part B excess charges for non-assignment claims, as well as health coverage while on foreign travel. Many beneficiaries find their current coverage is sufficient. If that is your case, you do not need to do anything during Open Enrollment.

Add or Change Medicare Prescription Drug Plans
For various reasons, some beneficiaries did not elect drug coverage when they first enrolled in Original Medicare. If you find yourself needing to add drug coverage, Open Enrollment is the time to enroll in a Part D plan. However, if you have been without drug coverage for more than a couple of months, a late enrollment penalty may be added to the plan premium. These penalties can add up quickly; if you have not enrolled in Part D, do not delay any longer.

If you currently have drug coverage, you also need to take a good look at your plan. Your prescriptions will change periodically. Plan formularies also change, and all too quickly, beneficiaries find themselves in the coverage gap, also known as the “doughnut hole.” While in the gap, a beneficiary will pay 100 percent out of pocket for prescription drug costs. Some enhanced drug plans offer some coverage even during the coverage gap. During Open Enrollment, beneficiaries may shop for drug plans that better suit their needs.

Switch From Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C)
Another Medicare option that includes medical care and can provide prescription drug coverage is a Medicare Advantage plan (Part C), also known as Medicare Health Plans. These plans are also offered by private insurers and must include everything Parts A and B cover. However, while Original Medicare offers nationwide coverage, Advantage plans are more restricted by regions and networks of providers.

Before committing to a Part C plan, beneficiaries should always ask three important questions:

• Does my doctor accept the plan?
• Are all my drugs covered?
• Am I covered if I travel outside the area?

Despite the restrictions, Advantage plans are very attractive to many beneficiaries because many have relatively low annual premiums. Some are offered premium-free. Although anyone enrolled in an Advantage plan still pays the Part B premium, some plans reimburse all or part of this expense.

Return to Original Medicare From an Advantage plan (Part C)
“Inexpensive” insurance is no bargain if it fails to protect against very high health costs. During Open Enrollment, a beneficiary enrolled in a Part C plan may switch back to Original Medicare with a stand-alone Part D plan.
Dear Judy,
What is the take on Medicare and private insurance? If you work past 65, who pays first?

Ruth

Dear Ruth,
Thank you so much for your interest in Medicare and how other insurances coordinate with it. Coordination of benefits ensures that insurance claims are not paid multiple times when someone is covered by multiple insurance policies. This means there is a Primary Payer and a Secondary Payer. The Primary Payer pays what it owes on your bills first. Then, you or your health care provider sends the balance to the Secondary Payer.

There are numerous sources of health insurance. These include the following:

- Employer Group Health Plan—covers eligible employee and/or spouse;
- Retiree Group Health Plan;
- Federal Employee Health Benefits Program;
- Military Health Coverage—either Veterans Affairs Health Care (VA), TRICARE and TRICARE for Life, Civilian Health & Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA);
- Indian Health Services—federal health program for American Indians and Alaska natives; and
- COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act)—provides temporary continuation of coverage, no longer than 36 months, that otherwise would be terminated.

Medicare is usually the Primary Payer when the other source of coverage is one of the following:

- Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap),
- Medicaid,
- Retiree Group Health Plan,
- TRICARE for Life,
- COBRA Continuation Coverage, and
- Indian Health Services.

Medicare is usually the Secondary Payer when the other source of coverage is one of the following:

- Employer Group Health Plan—this includes the “Working Aged,” those on Disability, and those with End-Stage Renal Disease (after 30 months, Medicare becomes primary);
- Workers’ Compensation;
- Liability and No-Fault Insurance;
- Certain authorized VA services at a non-VA facility; and
- Other private insurance plans.

Even when Medicare is the secondary payer, it may pay a beneficiary’s claim first if one or more of the following occurs:

- The expense would normally be covered by Medicare;
- The primary payer does not pay promptly (usually within 120 days); or
- The primary insurance claim is denied for reasons other than not being a proper claim.

The beneficiary must repay Medicare when the primary insurance settlement is reached.

The Medicare Summary Notice will indicate whether Medicare has denied a claim because the beneficiary has “other insurance.”

Medicare has an excellent publication, Who Pays First, that easily explains how Medicare works with other types of coverage. It can be found on the Medicare website at: medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/02179-Medicare-Coordination-Benefits-Payer.pdf?

For help understanding this topic, it is suggested that you contact your local SHINE Program and speak with a SHINE Counselor.
Planning and Creating Your Livable Florida

Jeanne Curtin, Esq.
Director of Livable Communities
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

As previously reported in Elder Update, in March, Governor DeSantis highlighted some of his key initiatives that support Floridians living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) and their caregivers. One of the Governor’s initiatives was to add a section in the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) that is exclusively devoted to ADRD. You may be wondering what the SHIP is and what has happened since March.

The SHIP is a statewide plan to improve the health of all Floridians. The Florida Department of Health (DOH) manages the SHIP, and the SHIP is overseen by a steering committee. The SHIP steering committee is comprised of stakeholders from across the state, including state and local government agencies, health care providers, advocacy groups, employers, non-profit entities, and universities and schools, who collaborate to identify opportunities to improve the health of Floridians. The Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) is one of those stakeholders.

The SHIP steering committee originally established eight priority areas: health equity; maternal & child health; immunizations; injury, safety & violence; healthy weight, nutrition & physical activity; behavioral health, which includes mental illness and substance abuse; sexually transmitted diseases, which include other infectious diseases; and chronic diseases & conditions, which include tobacco-related illnesses and cancer.

Each priority area in the SHIP is broken down into broad goals and then further broken down into strategies and objectives. The objectives are measurable and include due dates to ensure that progress is quantifiable and able to be tracked so that the SHIP may continually be updated to reflect current issues and opportunities in Florida’s public health system. The SHIP is a living, breathing plan.

Since March, DOEA has done the following:

- Partnered with DOH and the Alzheimer’s Association to identify other stakeholders who should be involved in the new ADRD priority area;
- Volunteered to serve as co-chair of the new ADRD priority area, along with Michelle Braunham of the Alzheimer’s Association;
- Identified goals for the new ADRD priority area;
- Invited other stakeholders to share their time and expertise by serving on a committee of the new ADRD priority area;
- Presented with the Alzheimer’s Association to the SHIP steering committee an initial set of goals, strategies, and objectives for the new ADRD priority area.

I am thrilled to report that on June 5, the SHIP steering committee adopted ADRD as the ninth priority area in the SHIP! This was only possible because of the partnership DOEA has with DOH, the Alzheimer’s Association, and other stakeholders. We collectively moved quickly, but thoughtfully, and the members of the SHIP steering committee welcomed this important new priority area into the SHIP.

The three goals of the ADRD priority area are as follows:

- Identify a statewide system of resources and support to formalize the ADRD network.
- Strengthen the capacity of care organizations to assess, diagnose, and treat individuals with ADRD and expand support for their caregivers.
- Protect individuals with ADRD from further vulnerability.

So why was it important to include ADRD in Florida’s SHIP? Alzheimer’s is the sixth leading cause of death in Florida, yet it was not directly addressed by the SHIP (although each of the other top 10 causes of death were addressed by the SHIP). The Alzheimer’s Association projects there are 560,000 Floridians living with Alzheimer’s disease – a number (which does not include those living with other forms of dementia) that is expected to increase to more than 720,000 by 2025.

Thanks to the vision of Governor DeSantis and Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Núñez, Florida is the only state in the nation to have a priority area in its SHIP devoted exclusively to the care of those living with ADRD and their caregivers. I look forward to keeping you apprised of work being done via the SHIP to improve the lives of those living with ADRD and their caregivers, and ensuring that our state is a place all Floridians can, and want to, call home!
Reaching for a Falls Free Florida

Mary Hodges  
Division of Statewide Community-Based Services  
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Preventing falls is important for older adults because falls can lead to disability or death, yet falls occur frequently due to problems with balance or walking. Some conditions or illnesses can cause difficulties with balance or walking including residential structure, medication side effects, worsening of medical or health conditions, muscle weakness, and chronic pain.

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), Falls Prevention Programs: Saving Lives, Saving Money Infographic, “Falls are common and costly.”

- Falls in adults age 65+ are the leading cause of head injuries and broken hips;
- One in four Americans age 65+ falls each year;
- Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall;
- Every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall;
- In 2013, the total cost of fall injuries was $34 billion (78 percent paid by Medicare);
- The total cost may reach $67.7 billion by 2020; and
- Even falls without injury can cause fear of falling, leading to physical decline, depression, and social isolation.

Falls Prevention Awareness Day brings emphasis to the public health problem of falls among older adults. Since 2008, a growing number of states have observed Falls Prevention Awareness Day on the first day of fall. Observances often occur throughout the month of September with health fairs, including falls risk screening, and other events to promote alertness about falls and provide information about preventing falls. This tradition began 11 years ago through the NCOA Falls Free® Initiative and the Falls Free® State Coalitions on Fall Prevention Workgroup’s coordination of falls prevention awareness activities on the first day of fall. Currently, 48 states and the District of Columbia observe Falls Prevention Awareness Day.

This year, the State of Florida is highlighting the effectiveness of falls prevention programs. Evidence-based programs have been scientifically proven to help to reduce the risk of falls, even when debilitating conditions or illnesses are present. Evidence-based means that research supports the use of the program. An article from Frontiers in Public Health entitled “Advancing Community-Based Falls Prevention Programs for Older Adults—The Work of the Administration for Community Living (ACL)” states, “These programs have been studied with older adults living in community settings and have been shown to result in positive outcomes for the participants. These programs are being implemented in community and clinical settings across the country with older adults of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and languages.”

As the state unit on aging in Florida, the Department of Elder Affairs receives funding from the ACL to administer evidence-based falls prevention programs with assistance from Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and other community partners. Some of the programs operating throughout the state include A Matter of Balance, EnhanceFitness, Tai Chi for Arthritis, and Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance. These programs are provided by qualified instructors in group settings like senior centers. Below are descriptions of the programs located at NCOA’s website ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-prevention-programs-for-older-adults-2.

**A MATTER OF BALANCE** is an eight-week structured group intervention that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels. Participants learn to view falls and fear of falling as controllable, set realistic goals to increase activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors, and exercise to increase strength and balance.

**ENHANCEFITNESS** is low-cost, evidence-based group falls-prevention and physical-activity program developed specifically for older adults. The exercises have been packaged into a formal regimen focusing on four key areas important to the health and fitness of mature participants: low impact cardiovascular; dynamic/static balance work, strength training, and stretching. Classes meet three times a week, an hour each session, providing social stimulation as well as physical benefits.

**TAI JI QUAN: MOVING FOR BETTER BALANCE**™ is an evidence-based falls prevention program delivered in two one-hour sessions each week for 24 weeks. Each session consists of warm-up exercises; core practices, which include a mix of practice of forms, variations of forms, and mini-therapeutic movements; and brief cool-down exercises.

Evidence-based falls prevention programs help older adults reduce their risk of falling. Individuals age 60 and older are eligible. To learn more about participating in an evidence-based falls prevention program, contact the AAA that serves your county.
PSA 2
AUGUST 7 - SEPTEMBER 25
WED., 1 P.M. – 3 P.M.
A Matter of Balance Class
The Wellness Center at CRMC
2819 Capital Medical Blvd., Tallahassee

SEPTEMBER 19, 10 A.M. – 12 P.M.
A Matter of Balance
University of St. Augustine
1 University Blvd., St. Augustine

PSA 5
SEPTEMBER 15, 2 P.M.
Saving Claire Documentary Premiere
Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center
4951 78th Ave. N, Pinellas Park

PSA 6
SEPTEMBER 16, 10 A.M. – 11 A.M.
Falls Prevention Presentation
Brandon Senior Center
612 N Parsons Ave., Brandon

SEPTEMBER 3 – 26
TUE. AND THU., 1 P.M. – 3 P.M.
A Matter of Balance
Baker County Council on Aging
101 E Macclenny Ave., Macclenny

SEPTEMBER 23, 11 A.M. – 1 P.M.
Falls Prevention Placement Distribution – In and Out Patients
Memorial Medical Center
3625 University Blvd., Jacksonville

SEPTEMBER 23, 9 A.M. – 12 P.M.
Falls Prevention Presentations and Screenings, and Health Information
Moosehaven
1701 Park Ave., Orange Park

SEPTEMBER 27, 12:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
A Matter of Balance
University of St. Augustine
1 University Blvd., St. Augustine

PSA 8
SEPTEMBER 19, 10 A.M.
Tai Chi for Arthritis Practice Session
Hope Connections
475 E. Cowboy Way, Labelle

SEPTEMBER 19, 3:30 P.M.
Tai Chi for Arthritis Workshop
Hope Cape Community Room
2430 Diplomat Parkway E
Cape Coral

PSA 9
AUGUST 28 – OCTOBER 16
WED., 9:30 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.
Matter of Balance Workshop
with Creole Interpreter
Glades Community Organization
366 S Main St., Belle Glades

SEPTEMBER 19 – NOVEMBER 16
MON. AND WED., 10AM – 11AM
Tai Ji Quan Moving for Better Balance
Century Village
5500 Century Blvd.
West Palm Beach

PSA 10
SEPTEMBER 23, 10:30 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.
Keeping Seniors Strong and Stable
Multi Service Complex
6700 Miramar Parkway, Miramar

SEPTEMBER 4 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 10:15 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Carol Manor
3667 S Miami Ave., Miami

SEPTEMBER 3 - SEPTEMBER 27
TUE., THU., AND FRI., 10 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Metropolitan Senior Center
1407 NW 7th St., Miami

SEPTEMBER 2 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 8:30 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Violeta Duenas Senior Center
6805 NW 117TH Ave., Miami

SEPTEMBER 3 - SEPTEMBER 27
TUE., WED., AND FRI., 10 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Smathers Senior Center
1040 SW 29th Court, Miami

SEPTEMBER 4 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 10:45 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Jack Orr Senior Center
550 NW 5th St., Miami

SEPTEMBER 4 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 10:30 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Olga Martinez Senior Center
500 NW 5th St., Miami

SEPTEMBER 3 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 10 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Carol Manor
3667 S Miami Ave., Miami

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MON., WED., AND FRI., 10:30 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Olga Martinez Senior Center
500 NW 5th St., Miami

SEPTEMBER 3 - SEPTEMBER 27
MON., WED., AND FRI., 10 A.M.
Enhance Fitness Class
Villa Verda Senior Center
700 SW 8th St., Miami
Active Transportation Helps Keep Older Adults Fit, Connected to Their Communities

Gail M. Holley
Florida Department of Transportation

In Florida, there are plenty of opportunities to go outside and get moving with great weather year-round. Doing so will help you stay active, on the go, and connected to your community.

Exercise is essential for everyone to maintain strength, flexibility, heart health, and more. Walking and riding a bike are two accessible and affordable ways to stay fit.

These active transportation options can help you stay on the go while keeping you healthy. If you live half a mile from a grocery store, park, or shop, consider walking or riding your bike. If these places are a little too far, perhaps you can combine walking or riding a bike with riding a bus. This way, you can complete your errands while achieving your exercise goals for the day.

Accessing and using a variety of transportation options are important to maintaining a good quality of life and independence. From Pensacola to Miami, cities and counties are committed to creating lifelong communities that help people traverse the area, whether out of necessity or just for pleasure, with or without a car.

Florida is joining the movement and became the fourth state in the nation to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, a partnership between the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and AARP, further confirming its commitment to making communities better for people of all ages and abilities.

If you are new to these modes of transportation, the Florida Department of Transportation’s Mobility Week from Oct. 25 to Nov. 1 is a great time to learn about them. A series of events will take place throughout the state to highlight all the transportation options available in your area. It is an excellent time to try new ways to get around your community and encourage your friends and family to do the same. For more details, visit fdot.gov/projects/mobilityweek.shtm.

Whichever transportation option you choose, SafeMobilityFL.com has all the tips and resources you need to understand, be proactive, and plan for safe mobility for life. With these tools, you can stay safe and commit to walking or riding a bike to maintain a healthy lifestyle and get you where you need to go in your community.

Learn how to be a safe driver, walker, bicyclist, transit rider, and more, by reading Florida’s Guide to Safe Mobility for Life. Order your free copy today by emailing contact@safemobilityfl.com.

AARP 2019 Community Challenge Winners

This year, AARP received more than 1,660 applications for the third annual AARP Community Challenge from nonprofits and government entities, resulting in a highly competitive selection process. A total of nearly $1.6 million was distributed to fund 159 quick-action projects across the country, helping communities make immediate improvements and jumpstart long-term progress to support residents of all ages. Florida received grants for the following projects:

Gainesville: City of Gainesville
Gainesville will host a month-long "Smart City Pop-up Living Lab" to engage residents in hands-on interactive exhibits that encourage thoughtful community dialogue on data, connected technologies, and quality of life. Physical exhibits will be made mobile when possible and will be offered in a digital format for web-based engagement.

Pensacola: Keep Pensacola Beautiful
New landscaping, shade trees, pollinator gardens, and waste receptacles will be installed at a musical instrument garden, which will ultimately help increase the public’s use of and engagement with the space.

St. Petersburg: Florida Dream Center, Inc.
To help reduce and address code violations, this project will engage residents through door-to-door outreach and make improvements to a number of homes in the community.

Tallahassee: Keep Tallahassee Beautiful
A new 860-foot linear park, with a bench swing, accessible water fountain, and signage, will connect two existing neighborhood parks, as well as a 16-mile rail trail to the coast.
CELEBRATE INTERGENERATIONAL MONTH THIS SEPTEMBER

Missy Floyd
Volunteer and Community Services Manager
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

It is an exciting time to be at the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) under the leadership of Secretary Richard Prudom and Governor Ron DeSantis.

The month of September is Intergenerational Month, which is a global movement celebrating the many benefits of relationships between adults age 60+ and younger people, bridging the gap between generations. It also seeks to raise awareness about societal changes that have created the need for mindfully uniting the generations.

DOEA’s main goal is to encourage multiple generations to come together in sharing, learning, teaching, and inspiring one another, which leads to health and social improvements for everyone.

Listed below are awesome ideas to get involved for Intergenerational Month and create connections between generations:

SEPTEMBER 6
National Read a Book Day
Invite youth and older adults to read a book and share the joy of reading.

SEPTEMBER 9
National Grandparents Day
This day is set aside to honor grandparents and the role they play in helping families and communities. Who doesn’t like to have lunch out? Take them to a favorite restaurant and treat them to an ice cream sundae for dessert. If your grandparents live in a senior community, invite them over for a special luncheon.

SEPTEMBER 11
National Day of Service and Remembrance
This memorial was started in 2002 to promote community service and as an annual tribute to the 9/11 victims, survivors, and those who rose up in service in response to the attacks. Encourage youth and elders to plan a service activity for this day.

SEPTEMBER 14
National Coloring Day
Coloring is a part of your creativity. Grab an adult coloring book and crayons and have fun! A suggestion: to frame the colored item as a keepsake.

SEPTEMBER 22
National Cooking Day
Who doesn’t enjoy the smell of fresh baked cookies? And children love being in the kitchen. Why not show them the secret to making those cookies extra delicious? It’s a great way to teach them measurements and math and even the smallest ones love to give the batter a stir. You’ll not only be making cookies, but also great memories together. This is a great opportunity to exchange recipes.

SEPTEMBER 24
National Voter Registration Day
Take a non-registered friend, neighbor, or family member to register to vote.

SEPTEMBER 28
National Neighbor Day
Enjoy some fresh air together! Go to a neighborhood park or just walk around the neighborhood. Kids love looking at birds and trees and asking questions about their surroundings. The fresh air and exercise will do everyone good! You could even plan a scavenger hunt or just collect items in nature or do a crafting activity together.

I look forward to working with everyone as I continue to promote volunteerism. Contact me at floydw@elderaffairs.org

What’s the Benefit?

Listed below are just a few of the many benefits you can receive from intergenerational month relationship-building activities:

- They can prevent isolation and loneliness in older adults.
- They provide opportunities for older adults and younger people to learn from each other and embrace differences.
- They can build a stronger community. Everyone wants to live in a vibrant community.
- They help keep stories and history alive with families and communities and continue legacies.
- They highlight the diversity of people of all ages and engages them in civic, educational, and cultural togetherness.
- Statistics show that children who spend time with older adults growing up are less ageist (showing less prejudice), as they get older.
When the Venice Vagabonds Were at Your Service

Chris Anderson
Herald Tribune

A group of high school kids in the 1950s drove around town and helped people. Now 84, original member David Pattison wonders where the chivalry went.

They were a bunch of high school hotrodders who hung around the flagpole each morning, and were especially cool on Fridays. That’s when they wore their rolled-up jeans, white T-shirts, and engineer boots and slicked back their hair.

Not that a girl from Englewood named Carolyn Rice was easily impressed by the greasers. She showed up one particular Friday in 1952, took one look at the rag-tag group of James Dean wannabes from Nokomis School — which would later become Venice High — and declared: “You guys look like a bunch of vagabonds.”

David “Digger” Pattison — who received his nickname because he worked at a funeral home at age 17 — thought about it for a minute before deciding it was perfect: They would be called the Venice Vagabonds.

True, they would drag race at the airport on the weekends, but this was more than your basic cool car club, because what these guys did has gone by the way of the sock hop and soda fountain.

The Vagabonds helped people, and not for money or merit badges, either.

Indeed, an assortment of high school kids who were not affiliated with any official school organization actually took it upon themselves to drive around Venice and look for people to help.

They were Roadside Assistance 50 years before the cellphone. They changed flats, jumped cars, and showed up out of nowhere if you ran out of gas. If you needed a doctor, they drove you to the hospital. Can’t get to the polls to vote today? No problem, ma’am. We’ll be right over. They searched out big events and volunteered to park cars.

“It was a give-back-to-the-community type of situation,” Pattison said.

They were like the baggers at Publix who walk you to your car, so helpful around town that the police department and gas station owners would call them with jobs. They even made up cards that were passed out.

Of course this was in the 1950s when times were much simpler and Venice was much smaller. In fact, there used to be a restaurant called Adrian’s, where you could eat a meal and leave whatever you could afford in a jar instead of receiving a bill to pay.

“That’s just the way people were,” Pattison said. “Can you believe having a restaurant that would operate that way? The world has changed so much. It’s just not the same world.”

Pattison — who graduated high school in 1953 — is not sure when things began to change, when kids who were not part of an organization stopped helping simply because it was expected. Maybe sometime in the late 1970s, he thinks.

People don’t think about going out and helping one another today like they used to,” he said. “The older people still go out of their way to help one another, but for the younger generation it’s ‘How much are you going to pay me?’”

Still, after all these years there is one thing that never changed: the Venice Vagabonds themselves. They remain a club, and you don’t have to be an original member to join either. A group of men, maybe 30, all car enthusiasts, make up the group. They meet every Tuesday for lunch and gather at J.R.’s Speed Shop on Venice Avenue the last Saturday of the each month to look at cars and talk about what was.

But there’s been one noticeable absence, however, and that’s Dave “Digger” Pattison. He hasn’t been with the old gang since last fall.

He is 84 now, has Stage 4 cancer, and is in hospice care. But even though he says he is on borrowed time and is hooked up to oxygen, his voice was clear, strong, and prideful when he spoke recently of the Venice Vagabonds.

“I’m very proud of it, and I’m glad it’s still going,” he said. “I just like to see old people get together and laugh and joke about the old times.”

Reprinted courtesy of the Herald Tribune Article originally appeared at heraldtribune.com/news/20190718/anderson-when-venice-vagabonds-were-at-your-service on Jul 18, 2019 at 12:46 PM, and updated Jul 18, 2019 at 9:51 PM
ANOTHER SUCCESS AT THE 2019 FLORIDA SENIOR GAMES

Nick Gandy
Florida Sports Foundation

Florida’s senior athletes made themselves known at the 2019 National Senior Games, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 15-24, winning a total of 450 medals, the third highest total of all 50 U.S. states.

The distance between Florida and New Mexico did not deter Florida athletes, as 687 made the trip out West for competition in 20 sports.

Florida swimmers climbed onto the medal stand 90 times at the West Mesa Aquatic Center, winning 29 gold medals, 28 silver, and 33 bronze.

A pair of former Florida Senior Games Athletes of the Year combined for 11 medal-winning performances. Patrice Hirr, the 2009 Female Athlete of the Year, from The Villages, won six gold medals in six events and Rudy Vazmina, the 2015 Male Athlete of the Year, from Sarasota, won five medals including four gold and one silver.

Included among Hirr’s medal-winning performances in the 70-74 age group was a National Senior Games record time in her age group in the 50-yard butterfly with a time of 37.60. Her time also established a new all-time best for the event in the 70-74 age group.

With Vazmina’s five medals, in the 65-69 age group, at the 2019 Games, he has now won a total of 20 National Senior Games medals (13 gold, four silver, three bronze), since 2013.

Another highlight of swimming competition saw two of Florida’s 90+ athletes in the water. Shirley Chase and William Mitchell, both of St. Augustine, combined to win seven medals, with Chase winning a gold and three bronze and Mitchell winning a gold and two bronze.

In winning her gold medal, Chase was the most experienced of all swimmers, at age 94, in the 500-yard freestyle, an event requiring swimmers to complete 20 laps in the 25-yard pool.

After shooting an 87 in the first of three rounds, William Jones, Jr., from The Villages, climbed up from fifth place to win the golf gold medal in the 80-84 age group. Jones found himself seven strokes behind the leader after day one, but had the overall low score for the second and third days (78 and 81).

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His three-day total of 246, was one stroke ahead of the second-place finisher, Marvin Selby, of Michigan. Selby was the leader after day two, four strokes ahead of Jones, but shot an 86 on the final day to allow Jones to win the gold medal.

The East Coast Bouncers won the women’s 75+ basketball gold medal, winning a total of 10 games in four days, with a center who fractured her wrist prior to the Games and coming out of the loser’s bracket to defeat their nemesis, the Michigan Spirits twice.

Undefeated in four games of pool play to achieve the top seed of the eight team championship bracket, the Bouncers lost their second game of bracket play to the San Diego Sun, a team they beat in pool play by 18 points. The Bouncers won their next three elimination games, including a win over the San Diego Sun, by 23 points to set up the final with the Michigan Spirits.

“They have a really tall center, named ‘Big Edna,’ who scores every time she gets the ball,” said Bouncers team member Julie Bradley. “We got a tall player from one of the other teams from The Villages to simulate her in our practices.

“The strategy worked as the Bouncers defeated the Spirits by identical scores of 23-19 in the final two games of bracket play.

“We were behind in both games and came back to win,” Bradley said. “We double-teamed ‘Big Edna’ and that was the key. We kept her from getting the ball and from scoring. Needless to say, we were ecstatic.”

Of the 13,718 total athletes competing at the 2019 National Senior Games, 687 were from Florida.

The 2019 Florida Senior Games, presented by Humana, will be held December 7-15, in Fort Lauderdale/Broward County. Florida Senior Games Local Series Qualifiers resume with the Pensacola Senior Games, beginning September 6. Through November, 10 Series Qualifiers at a variety of locations statewide, will give athletes age 50 and older a chance to qualify for the 2019 Florida Senior Games. For more information, please visit floridaseniorgames.com.
Celebrating 40 Years of Senior Center Month

John McQuillan
Bureau of Elder Rights
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan announced the first designated National Senior Center Week to his fellow Americans through a presidential proclamation. Earlier that year, in the spring of 1985, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution supporting a nationwide senior center week. Ten of the cosponsors of the bill were Representatives from Florida.

Before federal legislative action, support for this national designation began in 1979 mainly from local municipal governments and prominent organizations, including the National Council on Aging and the National Institute of Senior Centers. These organizations were instrumental in achieving the presidential proclamation a few years later.

In 2007, the National Senior Center Week continued to grow in impact and importance and was then designated from a week of celebration to an entire month dedicated to America’s senior centers.

Today, 40 years since the origins of Senior Center Month began, Florida is proud to continue its legacy of recognizing our great state’s remarkable older residents and life-improving services that senior centers provide. In 2018, senior centers served approximately 380,000 elders statewide, and those numbers are expected to continue to grow in the coming years. And, with over 285 senior centers in the state, Florida is among the top places in the country for the number of seniors served through center programs. Programs offered from these centers include fitness classes, public benefits counseling, employment assistance, inter-generational activities, transportation services, and social and recreational events. Centers also serve as hubs for civic engagement and volunteerism.

The theme for this year’s Senior Center Month is “The Key to Aging Well.” This theme was chosen to express how senior centers can serve as a key to all Floridians to not just live but to live well. With this theme, there are four categories, each representing a different opportunity for Florida’s elders to gain from their centers. The categories include Growing, Learning, Connecting, and Giving.

Through various programs, all residents of the Sunshine State, young and old, can celebrate our senior centers’ excellent work in building communities for a lifetime.

The Department encourages residents to check with their local senior center to see if there will be any special events related to the September designation. For more information about National Senior Center Month, please visit this link: ncoa.org/resources/2019-senior-center-month-program-guide.

National Employ Older Workers Week

Krysta Carter
State Director, SCSEP
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Did you know National Employ Older Workers Week is September 22-28? During this time, we celebrate and honor the dedication, experience, and commitment older workers bring to the workforce.

The U.S. labor force is aging, and the number of individuals who are 50 or older and still working is expected to increase to 35 percent by 2022. Forty-four percent of low-income older workers say they have no plans to retire within the next five years.

Many organizations across the country show their support for older workers every day by utilizing programs like the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to help older workers re-enter the workforce. If you are looking to hire, show your support, and employ an older worker, or to learn more about the Senior Community Service Employment Program, please visit the Department of Elder Affairs’ website at elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/scsep.php or contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center by calling the Elder Helpline toll-free at 1-800-963-5337.

Statistics: press.aarp.org/2018-9-26-AARP-Foundation-Expands-Workforce-Opportunities-For-Older-Workers
AGING WELL AND PLANNING AHEAD: Successful Seminar Series in Gainesville, Florida

Star Bradbury
Senior Living Strategies, LLC

Older people have countless concerns about aging: staying fit and mentally healthy; dealing with or avoiding serious illness like Alzheimer’s or stroke; caring for an ill loved one; getting financial and legal papers in order; planning end-of-life preferences and care, etc.

This past January to mid-May, Gainesville senior advocates and volunteers held an amazing free seminar series, “Aging Well and Planning Ahead,” at the Senior Recreation Center in Gainesville. The 18 weekly Tuesday seminars, free and open to the public, aimed to “educate, inform, and empower seniors to maintain and improve their quality of life for as long as possible.”

The seminar series was sponsored by the CCOA, the Community Coalition for Older Adults, a local senior advocacy group open to all. Three key organizers developed the seminars:

- Shirley Bloodworth, retired R.N., and Co-chair of the CCOA
- Star Bradbury, CEO, Senior Living Strategies, LLC
- Deborah Strickland, Director of Sales and Marketing, The Village of Gainesville, Florida

The wide range of topics drew from Gainesville’s almost unlimited pool of experts from the University of Florida and many other health, medical, financial, and social service providers. The series began with an emphasis on advance directives and getting your life in order, then expanded into various related topics. Among the topics were the following:

- **Bioethics and Patient Care**, William “Bill” Allen, JD, MDiv, UF College of Medicine
- **Current Thinking about Cognitive Impairment**, Michael Marsiske, PhD, UF College of Public Health and Health Professions
- **Alzheimer’s Disease: Planning for Legal, Financial, and Other Matters**, Leilani Doty, PhD, Associate Director of Programs, Central and North Central Chapter, Alzheimer’s Association
- **Senior Cognitive Challenges and Anesthesia**, Catherine Price, PhD, UF College of Medicine
- **Psychology and Aging: An Integrated Approach to Care**, Benjamin Bensadon, PhD, UF College of Medicine
- **Trends in Cancer Care**, Bruce Stechmiller, MD, UF Health Medical Oncology, Davis Cancer Pavilion
- **Living with Multiple Health Problems**, Laurence Solberg, MD, UF College of Medicine
- **Mental Health in Aging**, Yneisel Cruz-Almeida, PhD, UF Institute on Aging and Alexandra Martinez, Eds, LMFT, Director, Alachua County Crises Center
- **Financial Planning & Estate Planning**, Lauran Richardson Law, PLLC (Attorney)
- **Guardianship-Elder Abuse**, Shannon Miller, Esq. (Attorney), The Miller Elder Law Firm
- **How to Think About a Terminal Diagnosis and Palliative Care**, Sheri Kittleson, MD, UF College of Medicine

Pictured Above: Deborah Strickland; Award Winner, Shirley Bloodworth; and Star Bradbury, Organizer of Aging Well Seminar Series
Other topics that stimulated vigorous discussions included the following: making sense of the variety of senior residences and communities; geriatric medications; geriatric case management; pain management; use of medical marijuana; what a hospitalist is; what an end-of-life doula is; pre-planning your funeral and burial (traditional, conservation, or green burial); grief, loss, and healing; cultural and spiritual considerations; and ethical wills.

One session featured the movie, “Being Mortal,” based on the best-selling book by Dr. Atul Gawande. After we viewed the movie’s compassionate approach to care for the dying, representatives from both Haven and Community Hospice organizations facilitated small group discussions on death and dying. Participants noted they felt better prepared to be assertive when asking their medical team questions about their or a loved one’s diagnosis. One attendee shared, “I thought it would be difficult to hear information about dying, but instead it was very comforting.”

A later session presented a panel of self-described “well-adjusted happy and productive seniors” who spoke on “Coping, Recovery, and Continuing to Live After Loss.” Their heartfelt personal stories brought tears to the room as they described their journey through loss, grief, and eventual recovery.

Dr. Leilani Doty, who was both a presenter and a participant, noted, “These classes addressed concerns about aging well and highlighted the importance of planning ahead for future challenges, some of which I had not considered in depth. I appreciated various experts discussing topics relevant to aging and being able to answer challenging questions…especially discussing difficult health treatments.”

Based on their feedback, many attendees felt “better prepared” to deal with the process of aging.

Shirley Bloodworth, lead organizer, shared that she encouraged private notes from the participants and was surprised by the many notes she received about difficult, unresolved grief experiences. “I think the notes people wrote to me made them more personally involved in the class,” she said.

At every seminar three-to-four local agencies or programs had tables with educational handouts including the Alachua County Crisis Center, Alachua County Health Department, Alachua County Veterans Services, SHINE, Elder Options, Elder Care, University of Florida, and more. During breaks, participants learned more about services in the Gainesville area and had a chance to socialize. One attendee remarked, “So many people need to learn about all the services that are available. Thanks for bringing this important information to us; I learned so much!”

The series finished by celebrating all attendees and volunteers with a huge cake displaying the motto of the series: “Aging Is a Privilege! Enjoy!”

A special highlight was the $500 check gifted to the Senior Recreation Center from free-will contributions from seminar participants and the CCOA. The gift was an expression of sincere gratitude for the Senior Recreation Center donating the setting at no cost, copying the numerous needed handouts, and providing weekly volunteers.

In addition, many thanks to the numerous local businesses who were either table sponsors and/or provided much appreciated snacks at every seminar: Campus Credit Union, Forest Meadows Funeral Home, Hunter’s Crossing, Oak Hammock at the University of Florida, Senior Living Strategies, The Village of Gainesville, The Windsor, and more, including many home companion companies.

So much can be accomplished when we all work together!
LEARN HOW TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

**Florida Office of Financial Regulation**

October is recognized as National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, to bring attention to the importance of staying safe online. Scammers are always looking to take advantage of unsuspecting victims, and our world is more digitally connected than it’s ever been. So, it is important that you take steps to ensure you are protected before exploring online. Some best practices include the following:

- **Securing all devices.** Install and keep updated security software on all web-enabled devices including phones, tablets, and computers. Be very cautious if you connect a device to public WiFi, and don’t log into any financial apps or websites. Don’t click on pop-up ads in your browser or on links in unsolicited emails.

- **Protecting your information.** Be sure that you are using strong passwords and multi-factor identification, especially on websites that contain personal identifying information or financial account information. Take time to set privacy and security settings on websites and apps that you use. Make sure to back-up the information stored on your devices on a regular basis.

- **Sharing cautiously.** Before you post information on social media accounts, stop and think about what information you are revealing about yourself. Don’t be afraid to let a friend know if you’re uncomfortable with the level of information they are sharing about you. Criminals use social media too, and they can leverage information that has been posted to break into homes, steal identities, and ensnare victims in a scam.

- **Always be on the lookout for unsolicited mail or email that seems unusual, friends receiving mail or email that you didn’t send, unusual activity on your credit report, or posts on your social media account that you don’t recognize.** If this happens, your online accounts may have been hacked or compromised. Be sure to change passwords on all accounts immediately, and let your friends and family know not to click on any links in emails or social media posts from you. Notify companies where you know your information has been compromised. If your identity has been stolen, contact the credit reporting bureaus (Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax), the Federal Trade Commission, and your local law enforcement.

- **The Florida Office of Financial Regulation oversees Florida’s financial services businesses, and we are a valuable financial capability resource.** We also offer a helpful consumer resources section on our website, flofr.com, where you can find information on financial topics, including how to spot financial scams.

THE EMERGENCE OF PHONE SCAMS

**Corporal Dennis Rozier  
Bay County Sheriff’s Office**

I’m sure everybody has gotten phone calls from telemarketers, etc., but there has been a sharp uptick in the last year or two of complex phone scams designed to have people send money to the scammers via Western-Union, Green Dot cards, iTunes cards, or a variety of other types of gift cards. Unfortunately, most of these scammers target the elderly as they are generally trusting, in most cases not very tech savvy, and tend to have money in retirement accounts or nest eggs.

These scams usually prey on fear or greed. Fear scams usually incorporate some form of arrest warrant the scammer is claiming the victim has for a variety of reasons (not showing for jury duty, not paying taxes, car found with drugs and the victim’s ID in it, etc.). Scammers may have detailed descriptions of the victim’s residence obtained from Google Earth photos, and will claim they’ve already been by the victim’s house previously to serve the warrant. Law Enforcement will NEVER call you and tell you that you have a warrant and then offer to rectify it on the phone with a payment. Another popular scam utilizing the fear aspect is one where a relative of the victim has been arrested and is trying to arrange bail money. The victim will be transferred to a “lawyer” where they can arrange payment to the lawyer to get their relative out of jail. Both of these scams threaten the victim with jail time if they don’t immediately purchase gift cards and read the numbers off the back of the card to the scammer. The greed scams usually incorporate the victim winning some sort of lottery or prize, and they need to get a gift card to pay the taxes on the prize.

It’s important to stress to individuals that may be contacted by one of these types of scammers that nobody legitimate does business via gift cards or Western Union transfers. Police, IRS, and any number of other agencies do not take phone payments in this manner. At the point these payment methods are mentioned, simply hang up. It is also possible in many cases to weed out scammers by asking for a call-back number. Scammers do not want to release call back numbers as they may be traced to the scammer. Instead they will try to keep the victim on the phone and use high pressure tactics to obtain the money they’re seeking. Common sense, slowing down, and asking legitimate questions are usually the best ways to expose these scammers. If you simply aren’t sure, hang up and report it to your local law enforcement agency.
Information and referrals for elder services are available through the Elder Helpline within each county. For the deaf or speech impaired, all Elder Helplines can be accessed through the Florida Relay by dialing 711 from anywhere in Florida.

**Florida Area Agencies on Aging (Counties Served)**

**Northwest Florida**

**Area Agency on Aging, Inc.**
5090 Commerce Park Circle
Pensacola, FL 32505
850-494-7101
(Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties)

**Senior Connection Center, Inc.**
8928 Brittany Way Tampa, FL 33619
813-740-3888
(Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee and Polk Counties)

**Senior Resource Alliance**
988 Woodcock Road, Suite 200
Orlando, FL 32803
407-514-1800
(Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties)

**Area Agency on Aging for South Florida**

**Senior Resource Alliance**
5300 Hiatus Road
North Fort Myers, FL 33903
239-652-6900
(Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties)

**Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida**

15201 N. Cleveland Avenue, Suite 1100
North Fort Myers, FL 33903
239-652-6900
(Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota Counties)

**Aging and Disability Resource Center**
4400 North Congress Avenue
West Palm Beach, FL 33407
561-684-5885
(Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie Counties)

**Aging and Disability Resource Center of Broward County, Inc.**
5300 Hiatus Road
Sunrise, FL 33351
954-745-9567
(Broward County)

**Alliance for Aging, Inc.**
760 NW 107th Avenue, Suite 214
Miami, FL 33172
305-670-6500
(Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties)

**Florida Elder Helpline Directory**

Please call the telephone number below in your area for information and referrals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alachua</td>
<td>800-262-2243</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>888-242-4464</td>
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<td>Bay</td>
<td>866-467-4624</td>
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<td>Bradford</td>
<td>800-262-2243</td>
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<td>Holmes</td>
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<td>Indian River</td>
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<td>Monroe</td>
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<td>Okalooosa</td>
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<td>Wakulla</td>
<td>866-467-4624</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>866-531-8011</td>
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If you need information about, or referral to, a service provider outside Florida, call the national Eldercare Locator Service at 1-800-677-1116. An information specialist will assist you Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – 11 p.m. Eastern time. For people with Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), all Elder Helplines, as well as the Eldercare Locator Service, can be accessed through Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8771.

**Elder Helpline Can Assist Non-English Speakers**

By calling the Elder Helpline, Florida’s elders can access information and referral services through a translation service. Telephone interpreters provide live, on-the-line assistance by translating from English into as many as 148 different languages.

Are you worried that an elder relative or friend may be the victim of abuse? You can report known or suspected cases of abuse by calling Florida’s Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).
Florida’s abundant lakes, springs, and rivers make it easy to overlook that freshwater is a finite, fragile resource. The job of protecting water starts at home, where the biggest use is often for lawns and gardens.

You can create a yard that protects and conserves water and reflects the state’s natural beauty by following the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™. You can learn more about the following principles and related topics by visiting the Florida-Friendly Landscaping website at ffl.ifas.ufl.edu.

**Right plant, right place**
- A plant well-suited to an area’s soil, light, and water conditions won’t need a lot of water, fertilizers, pesticides, or pruning.
- The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design, available at ffl.ifas.ufl.edu, is a comprehensive guide to trees, shrubs, vines, and more.

**Water efficiently**
- A well-planned and operated irrigation system can reduce water bills and the chances of insect and disease problems.
- Watch for signs of wilt before watering.
- Adjust sprinklers so they don’t water paved surfaces, and don’t water in the heat of the day.

**Fertilize appropriately**
- Over-fertilizing stimulates excessive growth and invites pest problems. A properly fertilized lawn stabilizes the soil and promotes a healthy ecosystem.
- Use fertilizer only when necessary and follow directions on the package label.
- Never fertilize within 10 feet of any water body or before heavy rain.

**Mulch**
- Mulch retains soil moisture and inhibits weeds. Replace grass with mulch in shady spots or hard-to-reach areas.
- A 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch is best. Pull back mulch several inches from a plant base or tree trunk so disease doesn’t develop. Fallen leaves under a tree will create self-mulching areas.

**Manage yard pests responsibly**
- Manage insects with as few chemicals as possible. Start by choosing disease- and pest-resistant plants well-suited to your yard.
- When problems arise, remove the affected plant parts or pick off the insects by hand. Use insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils when possible.

**Attract wildlife**
- Create a haven for birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects by providing food, water, and cover. Limit the use of pesticides.
- Select plants with seeds, fruits, berries, foliage, or flowers that birds, butterflies, and caterpillars can eat. Provide water with a pond or birdbath.
- If cats roam the yard, it’s best not to attract birds and other animals.

**Recycle yard waste**
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn, and use fallen leaves and pine needles as mulch. Decomposed yard waste releases nutrients back into the soil.
- Build or buy a compost bin, and use it to mix yard waste with eggshells, teabags, and other kitchen scraps (no animal products). Nutrient-rich compost can improve your soil.

**Reduce stormwater runoff**
- A Florida-Friendly yard reduces stormwater runoff by absorbing and/or filtering rainfall. Stormwater runoff picks up trash and other pollutants as it flows to storm drains.
- Capture rainfall by using bricks, gravel, or other porous materials for walkways, patios, and driveways. Direct rain gutters and downspouts away from paved surfaces.

**Protect waterfront**
- Establish a 10- to 30-foot, maintenance-free zone along your waterfront. Keep yard debris and pet waste out of the area.
- A buffer zone of low-maintenance plants will help prevent erosion and provide shelter for wildlife.