Governor Ron DeSantis Promotes a "Season of Opportunity" in 2020 State of the State Address

As Secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), I commend Governor DeSantis for his speech and his continued commitment to Florida’s 5.5 million seniors. The Department is grateful for his bold leadership and support as we continue to make the Sunshine State a place for all Floridians, both young and old, to live, work, and play.

This annual speech marked the opening of the Legislature’s annual 60-day session and is the Governor’s second since taking office last year. This last year was focused on expanding educational opportunities, protecting the environment and natural resources, reforming health care, and investing in infrastructure, while also reducing taxes, and the Governor said that building on those successes will help Florida continue to grow.

In the area of health care, Governor DeSantis focused his remarks on expanding access to telehealth to repealing antiquated regulations. Governor DeSantis recognizes that individuals age differently, and therefore the state’s residents do not each need the same kind of care or services as others the same age. He addressed a major initiative, which is to provide access to less expensive prescription drugs by bringing in safe, name-brand drugs from foreign markets, specifically Canada. This program can only be completed and implemented with federal approval, and the DeSantis administration has been working with the Trump administration to move forward with the applicable regulations. Yet, there is still a long way to go, but in similar conversations regarding the aging network and health and human services, Florida is leading the way.

Another health care topic Governor DeSantis addressed in his speech was regarding the "patient savings" concept. This policy, which was enacted last year based on the idea of reducing health care costs, requires (1) price transparency and (2) a way for patients who use this information to save money. The State of Florida has implemented a patient savings plan for its employees and has already realized millions of dollars of savings. The goal is to help make...
NEW YEAR, FRESH START

Allison Burtoft
Editor-in-Chief

In this issue you will find articles to start the new year informed, as it is a top priority to keep you in-the-know so you can continue to live well and age safely. You’ll find informative articles from our partners at Scent Evidence K9 and the great work they are doing across the state; you’ll read updates from the Florida Senior Games, an event where inspiring senior athletes compete and showcase their skill; and you’ll find questions answered by the Financial Crimes Unit at the Tallahassee Police Department about ways to stay safe.

We’ve also included state agencies that work to improve the lives of the Sunshine State’s seniors. The Office of Financial Regulation shares ways to prevent tax fraud during this year’s tax season. The Department of Transportation’s Safe Mobility For Life program shares ways to incorporate walking as a mode of transportation for your daily life. Finally, you’ll see how the Department of Environmental Protection continues to work on making our incredible state parks accessible for all.

You’ll find articles from DOEA, including updates from Secretary Richard Prudom, a “year in review” of our Dementia Care and Cure initiative (DCCI) program, updates from SHINE with your questions answered in the “Dear Judy” column.

Our goal and priority is to keep you informed this year. We hope you continue to enjoy our publication and we can continue to share information from across the state.

Governor Ron DeSantis Promotes a ‘Season of Opportunity’ in 2020 State of the State Address...continued from page 1

this type of plan widely available throughout the state; therefore, Floridians could see many millions of dollars in savings as patients.

As the Governor said, “For everything there is a season, and this is Florida’s season of opportunity – we have the chance to build on a strong foundation, the chance to face the challenges before us and the chance to leave a legacy of success that will benefit our people now and in the future.”

At DOEA we know there are challenges in promoting the health and well-being of our growing and increasingly diverse older adult population; however, we believe that the changing demographics present a season of opportunity to use our social and technological ingenuity to develop solutions that can move us all forward. This will help secure the well-being, safety, and independence of Florida’s seniors.

It is imperative that older people in Florida are able to play their own crucial role in our society and economy. How Florida addresses the challenges posed by an aging population, while maximizing opportunities for active, healthy, and secure lives, will be key to the state’s prosperity in the years ahead.

SPECIAL THANKS

Elder Update staff is deeply gratified by the many generous donations given recently by our readers. Your generosity and kindness are truly appreciated, and your donations will be used to ensure the continued production of Elder Update.

- W.B. Auman
- Jean Chaffe
- Ella Cochrane
- Edith Johnson
- Dorothea Buckley
- Richard Moore
- Richard Telfeyan
- Adelaide Wagstaff
- Elizabeth Helms
- Ellen Cummings
- Gladys Reid
2020 CENSUS: Fact vs. Fiction

Colleen Tressler
Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

The Federal Trade Commission is partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau to help you guard against potential census scams. Knowing how the 2020 Census process works, what information you will — and won’t — be asked for, and some red flags will help you spot and report scams.

The Process
In mid-March 2020, the Census Bureau will start mailing out (and, in some areas, hand delivering) invitations to participate in the 2020 Census. You should get yours by April 1. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail.

The Census Bureau has an important job: to count every person living in the United States. Starting in May 2020, census takers will start visiting homes that haven’t responded to make sure everyone is counted. If you aren’t home or can’t come to the door, the census taker will come back up to six times. Each time, they’ll leave a door hanger with a phone number so you can call to schedule a visit.

The Questions
The census questionnaire asks how many people are in the home at the time you complete the form; their sex, age, race, ethnicity; their relationships to one another; phone number; and whether you own or rent the home. For the full list of questions on the 2020 Census, visit Questions Asked.

Signs of a Scam
Scammers may pose as census takers to get your personal information — and then use it to commit identity theft and other frauds. But there are ways you can identify official census takers.

Census takers must show a photo ID with the U.S. Department of Commerce seal and an expiration date. If you ask, the census taker will give you a supervisor’s contact information and/or the census regional office phone number for verification.

The Census Bureau will never ask for your full Social Security number, bank account or credit card numbers, money or donations, or anything on behalf of a political party. The 2020 Census will not ask citizenship status.

The Census Bureau may call you as part of their follow-up and quality control efforts. They also might call if you’re not home when a census taker stops by or when a personal visit is not convenient. Calls will come from one of the Census Bureau’s contact centers or from a field representative. Since we all know you can’t trust caller ID, visit How to identify a phone call from the Census Bureau for the phone numbers you can use to check out any calls you might get.

Make sure you have the latest and most accurate information about the 2020 Census. Visit 2020 Census Rumors to fact-check and ask questions.

If you suspect fraud, call 800-923-8282 to speak with a local Census Bureau representative. You also can file a report with the FTC at ftc.gov/complaint. Your reports may help law enforcement agencies launch investigations that could stop imposters and other fraudsters in their tracks.

Want information on the latest frauds and scams we’re seeing? Sign up for consumer alerts at consumer.ftc.gov.

FL Senior and US Navy Veteran Publishes Book

At age 92, Lowell Ward published a new book, which is titled Fragments. Ward, a veteran of the United States Navy and a Florida State University graduate, published his latest work on August 20, 2019.

Fragments was published nationwide through Amazon this past fall. Fragments is a story of Tony, a widowed man who finds remedy from his loss by writing about his late wife. Through his journey, Tony finds closure from his loss and a shot at potential new love.

To freeze your credit, you need to contact each of the three major credit bureaus: Equifax (1-800-349-9960), TransUnion (1-888-909-8872), and Experian (1-888-397-3742). If you request a freeze, be sure to store the passwords you’ll need to thaw your credit in a safe place.

Second: As to the harassment by the collection agency, please use this link for more information: http://myfloridalegal.com/pages.nsf/main/7cd1ef6dd790c14685256cc900560bd6!OpenDocument.

A debt collector is required to send you a written notice within five days after you are first contacted, telling you the amount of money you owe. The notice must also specify the name of the creditor to whom you owe the money and what action you should take if you believe you do not owe the money. If you do not believe you owe the debt, you may write to the collection agency within 30 days after you are first contacted, saying you don’t owe the money. The agency may not contact you after that unless you are sent proof of the debt, such as a copy of the bill.

Complaints about collection agencies may be filed either with Office of Financial Regulation or with the Federal Trade Commission, Correspondence Branch, Washington, D.C. 20580. You also may file a lawsuit against the collection agency for violating state and/or federal law. If you prevail, you may be awarded your actual damages, as well as attorneys’ fees and costs.

QUESTION: I recently talked to a friend who told me about a special lottery club where people pool their money together to buy a large amount of tickets, increasing their chances of winning. Are you familiar with these types of clubs?

ANSWER: These types of groups are typical in some work places. People believe if they pool their money and buy large groups of tickets, they have a better chance of winning, which might be true to an extent. The thing you need to be cautious of is being scammed out of your portion of the winnings, if there is indeed a winning ticket. There needs to be some type of written agreement between all parties stating who all participated in purchasing the tickets and how the winnings would be distributed. All parties should receive a copy of the agreement, signed by all parties, along with copies of the actual tickets that are purchased.

QUESTION: The other day I thought I had lost one of my credit cards. Luckily, I found it but the incident made me wonder what I should have done had I not been able to find it. Could you please provide that information?

ANSWER: If you discover you have lost your credit card, the first thing you should do is contact the issuing financial institution to advise them the card is lost/stolen so they can cancel the card. After cancelling the card, check your account to ensure there have been no fraudulent charges. If you determine fraudulent charges have been made, immediately dispute the charges with your financial institution (most will not allow you to dispute charges after 60 days). After disputing the charges, file a report with the law enforcement agency where the charges were made so they can begin a criminal investigation to try to identify the suspect. If you do file a report, be aware you may be required to testify in court.
Reduce Your Risk of Tax-Refund Fraud This Tax Season

Florida Office of Financial Regulation

January marks the start of a New Year and the beginning of tax season. Unfortunately, this is also the time of year that thieves start preying on unsuspecting taxpayers in a scam called tax-refund fraud. Tax refunds are an easy target for scammers because they only need a name, Social Security number, and birth date to steal an identity and file a return.

There are some simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of tax-refund fraud.

First, file your return early. Scammers will typically file fake returns as early as possible so that the IRS receives the false return before the legitimate one. Filing your return early helps reduce your risk of a scammer interfering with your refund.

Second, make sure you are using a safe method to transmit your return to the IRS. Before filing your taxes online, be sure that you are using a device equipped with updated security or anti-virus software and a secure internet connection. If you plan to mail your return, hand-deliver it to the post office instead of leaving it in your mailbox, where it could be stolen.

Third, make certain that your tax preparer is credible and properly credentialed before handing over personal information. The IRS maintains a directory of tax preparers with credentials and select qualifications. You can visit irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf to find a qualified preparer near you.

Fourth, stay cautious. Scammers may attempt to steal your personal information by impersonating an IRS agent via phone, email, or social media. Keep in mind that the IRS will never contact you by email, text, or through social media if they need information. They will also not threaten lawsuits or arrests. Do not give out personal information to unsolicited callers.

Finally, if you believe that you have been a victim of tax-refund fraud, call the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490.

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

**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 18.

Printed using Brain Bashers Sudoku brainbashers.com

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Insurance Consumer Advocate Profile

Tasha Carter
Florida's Insurance Consumer Advocate

As YOUR Insurance Consumer Advocate (ICA), I am your voice before the Florida Legislature, Chief Financial Officer, Insurance Commissioner, and others when insurance decisions are being made.

I was honored when, in August 2019, Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis appointed me as Florida’s Insurance Consumer Advocate. Prior to being appointed, I served as the Director of the Division of Consumer Services within the Department of Financial Services for nearly nine years. I previously served within the Division of Workers’ Compensation at the Department. Throughout my 17-year insurance career, I have always been an advocate for consumers, and I am excited to continue the advocacy work for YOU.

As your ICA, I actively engage with you and insurance industry stakeholders to find consumer-focused solutions on insurance matters. I develop legislation that protects and serves the interests of Florida’s insurance consumers. Access to affordable, quality insurance products and services is a necessity for all Floridians and ensuring a competitive marketplace in Florida is an important factor in accomplishing that goal. As such, my vision as ICA centers around three primary principles:

1 Balancing Florida’s Insurance Market
2 Identifying Trends and Improving Market Practices
3 Representing the Consumer’s Interests in Rate and Form Filings

I am also focused on increasing consumer awareness and education because as an educated, informed consumer, you are your own biggest advocate.

As your representative, I want to ensure that we have an open dialogue and two-way communication. I will share pertinent updates with you, and I want to hear from you. Please email me at YourFLVoice@MyFloridaCFO.com with insurance questions or concerns. Through Consumer Alerts, I’ll send you updates on legislative action I take, events, insurance fraud and scams I become aware of, and more. Sign up at MyFloridaCFO.com/Division/ICA/ConsumerAlerts.htm. You may also follow me on Facebook and Twitter at @YourFLVoice.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you as “The Voice for Florida’s Insurance Consumers.” It is an honor and privilege to be your Insurance Consumer Advocate.
Dear Judy,
Can I change Medicare Supplement Plans during Open Enrollment?

Thanks,
Amy

Dear Judy,
You can change Medicare Supplement Plans (also known as Medigap Plans) at any time of the year; but in most states, you will have to pass medical underwriting in order to do so. Medicare Supplement Insurance has a one-time open enrollment period. When you turn 65 or enroll in Part B, whichever comes later, you get a ONE TIME six-month window during which you can buy any Supplement Plan. During this period, the insurance company cannot turn you down for any pre-existing health reason. After the six months’ Open Enrollment period passes, you can still apply to change your Medicare Supplement Insurance. However, you must be able to pass the carrier’s underwriting to be accepted.

Medicare has an excellent publication, “Choosing a Medigap Policy: A Guide to Health Insurance for People with Medicare,” to help with questions. It is Product 02110 and can be found at medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/02110-Medicare-Medigap-guide.pdf.

Dear Judy,
Can I switch between Medicare Advantage and Original Medicare?

John

Dear John,
Medicare Open Enrollment occurs each fall from October 15 to December 7. During this time, you can switch from Original Medicare to Medicare Advantage, or vice versa. If you are already enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you can drop it and enroll in Original Medicare and a Part D plan during open enrollment with coverage effective January 1 of the following year.

Between January 1 and March 31 each year, if you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you can decide to leave your plan and return to Original Medicare and purchase a Part D plan to add drug coverage to Original Medicare coverage. During this period, you can also switch to a different Medicare Advantage plan if you are not happy with your current plan.

Dear Judy,
What are the Medicare Parts A and B premiums and deductibles for 2020?

Diane

Dear Diane,
Medicare Part A covers inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility, and some home health care services. Most Medicare beneficiaries do not have a Part A premium since they have at least 40 quarters of Medicare covered-covered employment.

The 2020 Medicare Part A inpatient hospital deductible that beneficiaries will pay when admitted to the hospital will be $1,408. The Part A inpatient hospital deductible covers a beneficiary’s share of costs for the first 60 days of Medicare-covered inpatient hospital care in a benefit period. The daily Part A co-insurance for days 61-90 of inpatient stay is $352. For beneficiaries in skilled facilities, the daily co-insurance for days 21 through 100 of extended care services in a benefit period will be $176.00.

Medicare Part B covers physician services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, durable medical equipment, and certain other medical and health care services not covered by Medicare Part A. The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B enrollees will be $144.60. The annual deductible for all Medicare Part B beneficiaries is $198.00 in 2020.

JUDY ARCHEY

Judy Archey is the Area Coordinator for Putnam, Alachua, Bradford, and Union counties. She also serves as a statewide trainer for the Department of Elder Affairs’ SHINE Program.

If you have a question you would like answered in our new Dear Judy column, please send an email to information@elder-affairs.org. You may also send a question by regular mail to:

Elder Update:
Dear Judy
Florida Department of Elder Affairs
4040 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399-7000

SHINE provides free, unbiased health insurance counseling and information to elders and their caregivers. Through a statewide network of trained SHINE counselors, individuals with Medicare-related questions and issues can receive personal and confidential assistance. Through the SHINE/SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program, SHINE counselors support the SMP mission to empower and assist Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse through outreach, counseling, and education. For more information, you may visit our website at FLORIDASHINE.ORG.
Volunteering is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. As we age, finding a place where we can use our gifts and talents to make a difference is essential. Volunteers for Community Impact (VCI) is a local grass-roots organization that focuses on assisting active seniors in finding volunteer opportunities so that they can use their skills to help improve our community.

We do this by matching those folks age 55 and older with meaningful service opportunities. We have two main programs – Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and Foster Grandparent Program (FGP).

RSVP
RSVP typically matches senior individuals with volunteer opportunities at smaller organizations, which need the assistance to grow and carry out their mission. Time commitments are flexible, and individuals can volunteer at more than one organization. The goal of RSVP is to place members who can commit to a regular and permanent volunteer position; however, there are also one-time, episodic opportunities that volunteers can participate in. Individuals who become RSVP members receive matching services and a personal RSVP orientation to ensure their volunteer experience is in line with their talents and interests.

RSVP at Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc., serves Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties. Service areas are varied, including, but not limited to the following: food pantries, tutoring and mentoring children, adult literacy, animal services, Veteran services, thrift store management, and making memory bears for hospice.

Foster Grandparent Program
Foster Grandparents are role models and mentors to children with exceptional needs in public school, the 4C Head Start programs, and Boys & Girls Clubs. These volunteers assist students who are struggling in reading, math, and social skills and help them get purpose and succeed in their academics.

Volunteers with FGP must meet a fixed income limit in order to participate. They do receive a small stipend for volunteering and are reimbursed for mileage to and from the site in which they volunteer. Eligible volunteers receive extensive training through a 20-hour orientation. They are then required to complete 20 hours of shadowing in order complete their training. All volunteers must be willing to serve for at least 15 hours a week but have the opportunity to set their own days and hours.

Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc., offers the Foster Grandparent Program in Osceola, Orange, Seminole, and Volusia counties.

For more information in about RSVP and FGP in Central Florida, please contact Volunteers for Community Impact, Inc., at 407-298-4180 or visit our website at vcif.org.

To locate an RSVP or FGP program outside of the Central Florida area, please visit the Senior Corps Pathfinder at nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps/get-involved/senior-corps-pathfinder or call 1-800-942-2677.
Jamie Gillhespy
Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Jeremy Richard loves his job at Lively Technical College. “I’m treated like everyone else on the team,” he explains. “No special treatment here.”

In most contexts, this statement would receive little notice. At the 14th annual Disability Employment Awareness Celebration in Tallahassee, where Richard was a featured speaker, this statement was followed by cheers and applause.

Every October, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities co-hosts the Disability Employment Awareness Celebration to commemorate individuals like Richard and the employers who hire people with disabilities. It’s a chance for employees, like Richard, to tell their stories. Other speakers at this year’s event included Millennium Nail & Day Spa Trainee Torey Roberts and Cayer Behavioral Group Office Assistant Connor Yeatts. Their stories, taken together, were both unique and familiar — after all, employment is something that most people can relate to and something that most may also take for granted.

Nationwide, 70 percent of people without disabilities ages 16-64 are employed, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is an overwhelming majority of the U.S. population. However, among people with disabilities in this same age range, only 30 percent of people are employed. This gap is startling, especially when one considers the financial toll that this lack of labor-force participation takes on the national economy, which, according to a National Office of Disability survey, costs an estimated $200 billion annually. Despite statistics like these, only 27 percent of Florida businesses have an explicit policy related to recruiting or hiring people with disabilities.

APD, which co-hosted the October event with Blind Services and Vocational Rehabilitation, is dedicated to promoting an inclusive workforce within which people of all abilities can participate. As APD Director Barbara Palmer explains, this means highlighting businesses that have already demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity. “These business leaders know that individuals with unique abilities are some of the most dependable employees within their organization. We are trying to spread the word that hiring a person with a disability makes good business sense.”

As a part of this larger mission, the Disability Employment Awareness Celebration includes an Exceptional Employer Awards Ceremony. This ceremony honors businesses that have demonstrated a strong commitment to hiring people with unique abilities. In total, 12 companies from across the state were honored at this year’s ceremony. Honorees included Cleveland Clinic Martin Health, The Home Depot, Golden Corral, The Chocolate Spectrum, and Wawa, Inc. These employers each received commemorative plaques that were donated by RESPECT of Florida and made by people with disabilities.

In all, this year’s event was a success. About 200 people came out to Tallahassee City Hall for the celebration, which was open to the public. Attendees included Leon County Schools Superintendent Rocky Hanna, Tallahassee Mayor John Dailey, Mayor Pro Tem Curtis Richardson, and other leaders. Mayor Dailey spoke at the event, as did leaders from APD, Blind Services, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Vocational Rehabilitation, and ABLE United.

However, it was speaker Torey Roberts who best summed up the spirit of the event. After sharing what her job meant to her, she concluded by thanking “all employers who can see our abilities and give us a chance to have a career and live our best life.”
Disaster Preparedness: Spreading the Message Year-round

Megan Bond & Jessica Tice
Bureau of Planning and Evaluation
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Each spring, DOEA works with Florida’s Aging Network to ensure that older Floridians are well-prepared for hurricane season. You may even read the Department’s Disaster Guide as part of your own preparations. Did you know that DOEA’s preparedness efforts continue throughout the rest of the year? This year, we focused on sharing some of Florida’s preparedness best practices with gerontologists, researchers, community partners, and our most important audience: YOU.

In November, Dr. Megan Bond, Community Research Consultant, and Jessica Tice, Research Coordinator, had the opportunity to present the Department’s efforts on disaster preparedness at two important events: the Gerontological Society of America’s Annual Scientific Meeting (GSA) in Austin, Texas and the Seven Hills Regional User Group for Geographic Information Systems (SHRUG) in Tallahassee, Florida.

To share and collaborate with others, two important projects were featured at these forums. The first was the innovative DOEA maps and evacuation rosters, and the second was on the targeted approach developed by the Department to guide recovery work for Hurricane Michael.

Staff presented our award-winning methods in disaster preparedness by using client location and assessments to produce maps and rosters to enhance the pre-storm outreach activities of aging network partners. We use maps to identify priority clients for evacuation, based on high-risk storm surge and flooding zones. We then create contact rosters from these maps, which Aging Network partners use to coordinate safety plans for clients in high-risk areas. Many community partners, researchers, and gerontologists from across the globe were excited to learn more about how they could apply similar methods to promote disaster preparedness in their own states and communities.

Targeted Approach for Hurricane Michael Recovery

Staff presented a detailed outreach strategy developed to find the older Floridians who returned to or remained in the community in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. As the affected areas worked to recover, DOEA identified resources and resource gaps in the neighborhoods that were hardest hit and most at-risk. Using the Elder Needs Index* (ENI) and other maps made from data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, DOEA overlaid damage assessments and local entities to determine where to focus the long-term recovery efforts. Then we could see which community partnerships could provide resources in areas of the community where older people needed it most.

*The ENI includes a five-map package and presents American Community Survey population data of the older adults in one of four risk groups: age 85+, minority, disability, or poverty. The Department will be preparing to release an updated ENI in early spring 2020. For more information on the Elder Needs Index, please visit elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/eni_home.php.
REPORTING SOCIAL SECURITY SCAMS

SSA Announces New Online Reporting Form for Imposter Scam Calls

Social Security Administration
Office of the Inspector General

Andrew Saul, Commissioner of Social Security, and Gail S. Ennis, the Inspector General for the Social Security Administration, announce the launch of a dedicated online form at oig.ssa.gov to receive reports from the public of Social Security-related scams. These scams—in which fraudulent callers mislead victims into making cash or gift card payments to avoid arrest for purported Social Security number problems—skyrocketed over the past year to become the #1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission and the Social Security Administration.

To combat these scams, Social Security and the OIG will use the new online form to capture data that will be analyzed for trends and commonalities. The OIG will use the data to identify investigative leads, which could help identify criminal entities or individuals participating in or facilitating the scams. Ultimately, these efforts are expected to disrupt the scammers, help reduce this type of fraud, and reduce the number of victims.

“We are taking action to raise awareness and prevent scammers from harming Americans,” Commissioner Saul said. “I am deeply troubled that our country has not been able to stop these crooks from deceiving some of the most vulnerable members of our society.”

Commissioner Saul and Inspector General Ennis encourage the public to use the new online form to report Social Security phone scams including robocalls and live callers, as well as email, text, and in-person scams. The form allows people to create a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN), so if OIG contacts a person about their report, they will know the call is legitimate.

“If there is a problem with a person’s Social Security number or record, in most cases Social Security will mail a letter. If a person needs to submit payments to Social Security, the agency will send a letter with instructions and payment options. People should never provide information or payment over the phone or Internet unless they are certain of who is receiving it.

The Social Security OIG will also continue to take reports of fraud, waste, and abuse in Social Security’s programs and operations. A separate online form for those reports remains available at their website.

Social Security employees do occasionally contact people—generally those who have ongoing business with the agency—by telephone for business purposes. However, Social Security employees will never threaten a person, or promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money. In those cases, the call is fraudulent, and people should just hang up.

Generally, the agency mainly calls people who have recently applied for a Social Security benefit, someone who is already receiving payments and requires an update to their record, or a person who has requested a phone call from the agency. If a person is not in one of these situations, they normally would not receive a call from the agency.

Social Security will not do any of the following:

• Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended.
• Contact you to demand an immediate payment.
• Ask you for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
• Require a specific means of debt repayment, like a prepaid debit card, a retail gift card, or cash.
• Demand that you pay a Social Security debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe.
• Promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money.

Free up Your Time by Using My Social Security

Maria Ortega
Social Security Administration,
South Florida

Time is one of our most valuable commodities. That’s why at Social Security, we are constantly improving our online resources to make doing business with us easier and faster.

With a My Social Security account, those receiving benefits can change their address and direct deposit information; get proof of their benefits; and request replacement documents, like a Medicare card. If you aren’t currently getting benefits, you can check your earnings record, get estimates of your future benefits, and view your Social Security Statement. In many states, you can even request a replacement Social Security card online. See everything you can do with a my Social Security account and open one today and at socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

You don’t need a my Social Security account to do the following:

• Select or change the way you receive information from Social Security if you are blind or visually impaired at socialsecurity.gov/people/blind.
• Block electronic and automated telephone access to your personal information at socialsecurity.gov/blockaccess.
• Apply for extra help with your Medicare prescription drug plan costs at socialsecurity.gov/extrahelp.

Be sure to share my Social Security with friends and family. By freeing up their time, they may plan on spending more of their valuable time with the people they love.
The 2020 Florida Senior Games Local Series Qualifiers Feature 22 Events Statewide

Florida’s senior athletes, age 50 and older, can start filling in their calendars with dates for 2020 Florida Senior Games Series Qualifier competitions statewide.

In conjunction with 22 local communities around Florida, the 2020 Florida Senior Games schedule of local series qualifiers is set to begin in January 2020.

The opening weekend of the 2020 Calendar of Qualifiers is Saturday, January 18, in Sarasota at the Gulf Coast Games for Life. Competition continues at the Heartland Senior Games (Jan. 28-Feb. 28) and Lee County Senior Games (Jan. 31-March 14).

“The local series qualifiers are the starting point for the senior athlete’s journey,” said Marvin E. Green, Jr., Vice President of Amateur Sports. “Once the athletes find their game on the local level, they then have the opportunity to bring their game to the state level at the Florida Senior Games. From there they can go on to a national level in 2021 in Broward County. We proudly support the efforts of all of the local communities who provide this starting point for our Florida Senior Games’ participants.”

New to the Games in 2020 will be the Village of Pinecrest Senior Games, making its debut in Miami-Dade County November 2-6. The 2020 events conclude with the 46th Annual Golden Age Games. The Golden Age Games are recognized as the first Senior Games event in the country, dating back to 1974.

The 2020 Florida Senior Games presented by Humana, to be held December 4-13, 2020, in the Greater Fort Lauderdale area, will be a qualifier for the 2021 National Senior Games, also to be held in the Greater Fort Lauderdale area, November 5-18, 2021.

About the Florida Senior Games presented by Humana

The Florida Senior Games presented by Humana are held annually by the Florida Sports Foundation (FSF), the state’s lead sports promotion and development organization, and a division of Enterprise Florida, Inc. The Foundation works in conjunction with a variety of local sports industry partners to present the different competitions. The Florida Senior Games presented by Humana, an annual amateur sports tradition in Florida, are part of the state’s $57.4 billion sports industry that accounts for 580,000 jobs statewide.
2020 FLORIDA SENIOR GAMES LOCAL SERIES QUALIFIER EVENTS

Heartland Senior Games
January 28 - February 28
Phone: (863) 784-7032
Email: communityeducation@southflorida.edu
southflorida.edu

Gulf Coast Games for Life
January 18 - February 9
Phone: (941) 861-7275
Email: parksonline@scgov.net
scgov.net/parks

Lee County Senior Games
January 31 - March 14
Phone: (239) 839-7062
leeparks.org

Good Life Games of Pinellas County
February - November
Phone: (727) 441-9463
goodlifegames.org

Polk Senior Games
February 29 - March 16
Phone: (863) 533-0055
polkseniorgames.org

Charlotte County Fit For Life Senior Games
March 1-22
Phone: (941) 681-3760
charlottecountyfl.gov

Capital City Senior Games
March 5-16
Phone: (850) 891-3875
talgov.com/seniorgames

Delray Beach Senior Games
February 28 - March 6
Phone: (561) 243-7277
mydelraybeach.com

Port Orange Senior Games
March 19-28
Phone: (386) 506-5932
port-orange.org/617/senior-games

Lake Senior Games
April 4 - September 27
Phone: (352) 356-6544
lakeseniorgames.com

The Villages Senior Games
April 18-26
Phone: (352) 753-1716
thevillageseniorgames.com

Pensacola Senior Games
September 11-27
Phone: (850) 426-2562
cityofpensacola.com

Palm Coast & the Flagler Beaches Senior Games
September 12-20
Phone: (386) 986-2516
palmcoastgov.com

Gainesville Senior Games
September 11-20
Phone: (352) 338-9300
gainesvillesportscommission.com

Jacksonville Senior Games
September 25 - October 3
Phone: (904) 255-5667
jaxseniors.net

Tampa Bay Active Life Games
October 5-15
Phone: (813) 744-5595 Extension 2
hcflgov.net/activelife

Broward Senior Games
October 1-14
Phone: (954) 934-5385
bpvservices.com

Cutler Bay Senior Games
October 26-30
Phone: (786) 573-5502
cutlerbay-fl.gov

Ormond Beach Senior Games
October 24-31
Phone: (386) 676-3291
Email: srgamesob@gmail.com

Martin County Senior Games
October 24 - November 1
Phone: (772) 353-9234
martin.fl.us/seniorgames

Village of Pinecrest Senior Games
November 2-6
Phone: (305) 284-0900
pinecrest-fl.gov

Golden Age Games
November 6-15
Phone: (407) 688-5129
sanfordfl.gov

Florida Senior Games
December 4-13
Location: Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward Co.
Florida Sports Foundation
Phone: (850) 577-7200
Email: games@playinflorida.com
floridaseniorgames.com
Dementia Care and Cure Initiative: A Year in Review

Laura Copeland
Bureau of Elder Rights
Department of Elder Affairs

All Floridians deserve to stay actively engaged within their communities throughout all stages of life, and having a diagnosis of dementia should not be a limiting factor in community participation. In Florida alone, there are an estimated 560,000 people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, the most common type of dementia, and this statistic is not inclusive of the tens of thousands of Floridians living with other forms of dementia. Throughout the state, Dementia-Caring communities are breaking down barriers and reducing stigma surrounding dementia; creating welcoming spaces and hospitable environments; bringing dementia sensitivity, education, and awareness to all sectors of a community; providing resources and support to families; and advocating for care and cure programs through the Dementia Care and Cure Initiative (DCCI).

2019 was an exciting year for DCCI, with palpable growth and noteworthy progress. We celebrated Task Force successes throughout the state and witnessed expansion in the number of Task Forces. In March 2019, Governor DeSantis proposed a challenge to bring this initiative into all Planning and Service Areas (PSAs) in Florida, and the Department of Elder Affairs is proud to say that this challenge was met. Each of the 11 PSAs in the state is now home to at least one DCCI Task Force, and during 2019, the number of these Task Forces grew from 10 to 14.

While DCCI is a state-led initiative, the driving force behind it lies within the dementia-caring communities, whose Task Forces are comprised of leadership from the region’s Area Agency on Aging and Memory Disorder Clinic(s) and include community professionals and stakeholders who volunteer their time. It is up to each Task Force to assess the needs of their community and identify areas and ways to make their communities more dementia-caring and aware.

The groups in Northwest Florida, Big Bend, Gainesville, Brevard, Sarasota, and Fort Myers have focused much of their efforts on education and training, and to date have cumulatively provided free dementia sensitivity training to over 8,600 individuals from various sectors of their communities, including first responders, local businesses, civic groups, health care providers, faith-based organizations, governmental organizations, nonprofits, students, and many more.

Gainesville and Sarasota have digitalized this training, making it more accessible for community entities. Fort Myers worked with the marketing team at Lee Health to create a short DCCI marketing video, and just wrapped up filming of a dementia sensitivity training video in partnership with a team at Florida Gulf Coast University. Tampa and Orlando’s Task Forces are modifying the dementia sensitivity training for use throughout their service areas and will be ready to offer this training to area entities in early 2020. Window cling decals are offered to community partners who participate in the DCCI training throughout the state, to show their community that they are a dementia-caring space or place, and that staff are trained to communicate and interact in an appropriate manner with patrons who are affected by dementia.

Jacksonville’s Task Force created a discharge toolkit for people living with dementia and their care partners, comprised of area resources that is being used at one of the rehab facilities in Duval County, and they also applied for and received a community grant to fund a local Memory Café. Tampa’s group worked with their Board of County Commissioners, who passed a proclamation that declared June 2019 as “Dementia Care and Cure Initiative Community Month” in Hillsborough County. Several members of Brevard and the Big Bend’s Task Forces are trained facilitators for Dementia Live® and Virtual Dementia Tour®, which are educational experiences designed to heighten awareness and deepen empathy for those living with dementia.

Miami’s Task Force hosted a public forum over the summer and invited two doctors to share the findings from their research study about the disparities of Latino caregivers for people with Alzheimer’s in utilization of support services and discussed potential next steps for improving access to and quality of services for this population. Several Task Forces hosted and participated in community events and health fairs on behalf of DCCI, and some utilize social media accounts to help spread the word about DCCI in their area, and to help raise awareness about dementia.

We extend our sincerest gratitude to each Task Force member throughout Florida who is working to create a more Dementia-Caring state. To see community partners coming together from Pensacola to Miami and every PSA in between and combining their passion, time, talents, and creativity to make their communities more welcoming to a large portion of our state’s population that is impacted by dementia has been incredible to witness. Stay tuned for what 2020 has in store for DCCI throughout the state, as it will surely be another year for the books, and we welcome Martin County, Pasco-Pinellas counties, Broward County, and Palm Beach County aboard!
Alzheimer’s Disease Advisory Committee

Ronald Lucchino, PhD
Chair, Alzheimer’s Disease Advisor Committee

Currently the adult population over 65 in Florida is 21 percent, above the national average of 16 percent, making Florida first in the USA with older adults over 65. By 2030 the population will balloon to 25 percent.

This demographic increase is due to Florida becoming a Mecca for retirement, which is compounded by the current high number of older adults already residing in Florida. The swell in those over 65 will intensify the number of older adults with Alzheimer’s disease resulting in a growing risk of a public health crisis in Florida.

Realizing the continued growth of our older population increasing the risk of a public health crisis, the Florida Legislature recently passed a bill signed by the Governor to revise the Alzheimer’s Disease Advisory Committee (ADAC). The ADAC membership is now comprised of 15 members: 11 appointed by the Governor and four by the Legislature. The goal of ADAC is to assess Florida’s future needs and suggest policies to prepare for this looming public health crisis. The objectives of ADAC to attain this goal are as follows:

- Examine existing resources and gaps in public and private research activities, clinical services, institutional care, home-based community services, current professional social and health care practitioners, and the educational programs preparing future health and social care practitioners on Alzheimer’s disease and family caregivers.

- Develop strategies from early to late onset dementia inclusive of all cultures.

- From the information compiled, develop polices to mobilize and coordinate the public and private sector response to meeting the public health crisis.

- To ensure continuity of response, ADAC will submit an annual progress report with suggested public policies to the Department of Elder Affairs, both chambers of the state Legislature, and the Governor. In addition, every three years ADAC will submit an update on its activities and recommendations to the DOEA State Alzheimer’s Plan.

During the first year ADAC will compile information related to Alzheimer’s disease and caregivers in clinical care, community care, institutional care, and research. Currently ADAC is conducting surveys on the availability, accessibility, and coordination of the resources of the clinical, community, and institutional care networks. Current ADAC activities include the following:

- **HOLD OPEN FORUMS** throughout Florida to provide input by care providers, individuals with Alzheimer’s disease, and social and health care practitioners on their needs.

- **CAREGIVER SURVEY** Surveys will be sent to caregivers and individuals with Alzheimer’s disease for their input on perspective toward the community and institutional services. The surveys will be sent through the following networks: Dementia Cure and Care Initiative (DCCI), Memory Disorder Clinics (MDC), Alzheimer’s Disease Association, and Area Agency on Aging/Aging and Disabilities Resource Centers (ADRC).

- **AGENCY SURVEY** Surveys will be sent to the community and institutional service agencies/organizations to determine their infrastructure in providing and coordinating services for individuals with ADRD and their caregivers. The following agencies and organization will coordinate sending out the survey to their network agencies: skilled nursing homes, assistant living facilities, home care agencies, Memory Disorder Clinics (MDC), crisis intervention, hospitals, hospice, Area Agencies on Aging, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Adult Day Care Centers (ADCC), and Adult Family Care Homes (AFCH).

The results of the surveys will be reviewed, and, based on survey findings, ADAC will make recommendations to improve accessibility, availability, and coordination of services and resources. The results of the surveys will provide regional information from the 11 Planning and Service Areas (PSA). This information will be used in the annual report to provide a summary of findings across the entire state of Florida.

To participate in the caregiver or agency survey, please visit the Department of Elder Affairs website at elderaffairs.org or contact aittamat@elderaffairs.org.

The information obtained by the ADAC will be instrumental in developing future strategies for mobilizing and coordinating existing and new public and private resources to support families caring for individuals with Alzheimer’s. The ADAC’s efforts will make Florida a recognized model for bringing public and private resources together to cooperate in addressing this health care crisis.
Using TrialMatch to Find a Cure for Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Association

Individuals with dementia or those who are at risk of developing it, caregivers, and healthy volunteers with no dementia issues are needed today to help advance Alzheimer's research. By participating in clinical research, you can help to accelerate progress and provide valuable insight into potential treatments and methods of prevention. By 2025 there will be approximately 720,000 Floridians living with Alzheimer's, meaning the need for clinical research is greater than ever. Without the participation of people like you, finding a cure is nearly impossible. Recruiting and retaining trial participants is now the greatest obstacle, other than funding, to developing the next generation of Alzheimer's treatments.

The Alzheimer's Association has TrialMatch: a free, easy-to-use matching service that generates customized lists of studies based on user-provided information. The studies are safe, free, and do not obligate participants. TrialMatch allows you to easily see what studies you may qualify for. The continually updated database contains more than 250 studies, including both pharmacological (drug) and non-pharmacological (non-drug) studies being conducted at sites across the country and online.

The Alzheimer’s Association TrialMatch® database includes the following:

- Treatment trials to test new treatments or combinations of treatments.
- Diagnostic studies that find new tests or procedures for diagnosing a disease or condition.
- Prevention trials that investigate ways to prevent the onset of diseases. These studies look at whether a certain medication, vitamin, or lifestyle change (for example, healthy eating or exercise) might prevent Alzheimer's.
- Quality of life studies that explore ways to improve quality of life for individuals who have a chronic illness, their caregivers, and family members. These studies’ goal is to figure out what types of support, education, or training solve some of the challenges that those impacted by the disease face.
- Online studies that are web-based and conducted entirely online. These studies often explore the same kinds of questions as other studies but are able to be completed online, without requiring a visit to a particular site.
- You can play a more active role in your own health care.
- You can gain access to potential treatments before they are widely available.
- You can receive expert medical care at leading health care facilities - often free of cost - while participating in important medical research.
- You can help future generations by contributing to Alzheimer's research.

By using TrialMatch, you are playing a crucial role in our state’s fight against dementia. To create a free TrialMatch account and begin viewing available studies locally and online, please visit alz.org/TrialMatch or call 1-800-272-3900.
An Interactive Community Discussion on Creating Dementia Capable Communities

Unam Mansoor
Alzheimer’s Disease Initiative Coordinator
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Florida has the highest population percentage of residents age 65 and older in the nation and has the second highest prevalence of Alzheimer’s disease in the country. According to recent stats, 560,000 individuals are living with Alzheimer’s disease and it is projected to increase to 720,000 individuals in 2025.

According to the Alzheimer’s Association Facts and Figures 2016, “Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease and the most common cause of dementia. Dementia is characterized by a decline in memory, language, problem-solving and other cognitive skills that affect a person’s ability to perform everyday activities.” Alzheimer’s disease has no cure and is ultimately fatal.

These stats and the severity of the disease indicate a need for a more targeted approach to create awareness on Alzheimer’s disease and increase research to find a cure. In order to carry out this instrumental task, the Alzheimer’s Disease Advisory Committee (ADAC) was developed with the aim to provide legislative, programmatic, and administrative support to the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) in matters relating to Alzheimer’s victims and their caregivers.

ADAC recently undertook the task to hold open forums where community members, caregivers, and agency partners can come together to discuss the gaps and needs in the current resources and services being provided to assist people with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers. These forums provide a platform to hold interactive community discussions on creating dementia-capable communities.

ADAC kicked off this initiative in Longwood on December 5, 2019. The Alzheimer’s Association facilitated this forum and the panel included Representative Scott Plakon, Surgeon General Scott Rivkees, Dr. Rosemary Laird, and DOEA Secretary Richard Prudom. The second open forum was held in Tallahassee on December 18, 2019, and was facilitated by DOEA and Dr. Rob Glueckauf from FSU College of Medicine.

Both forums were opened by the panel members, who gave a short presentation on what Alzheimer’s disease is and current tasks of their respective organizations. They were then asked a set of questions including the following:

- What are the gaps in services?
- What are the barriers to connect to services?
- What practices are currently working in regard to getting a diagnosis, intervention strategies and support for the Alzheimer’s victim and caregivers?
- What would the participants like to see improved within their community?

Participants shared their experiences and highlighted the areas that need improvement. Their feedback revolved around:

- Workforce development
- Lack of funding
- Increased focus on research
- Creating awareness on Alzheimer’s disease, resources available in the community and how to access them
- Coordination and continuity of care
- Lack of volunteers
- Development of a baseline tool to assist with early detection
- Lack of transportation and isolation for the rural populations
- Long wait times for getting an appointment with the neurologists.

Participants accentuated the great work that the Dementia Care and Cure Initiative (DCCI) Task Force is doing in creating dementia-friendly communities. Attendees also commended the social workers at Memory Disorder Clinics that help their clients and them connect with the various resources available in the community while waiting for appointments with the neurologists.

These open forums have been a great source of information for the ADAC members. We are planning on conducting these forums throughout the state, and the information/feedback gathered through them will be used to make necessary improvements in the system and design programs that can help bridge the gaps identified between the communities and their access to services.
Using Scent to Find Floridians Who Wander

Joe Blanton
Scent Evidence K9

Scent Evidence K9 CEO, Paul Coley, and The Alzheimer’s Project CEO, Debbie Moroney, partnered to introduce the Bringing the Lost Home Project bill earlier this year to help law enforcement better serve their high-risk dementia and autism populations who are at risk of wandering and going missing. The bill, passed by Gov. DeSantis in June 2019, provides Scent Preservation Kits® to sheriffs’ offices in Bay, Sumter, and Seminole counties.

The Scent Kits® are being distributed to families with loved ones living with Alzheimer’s disease, or another dementia, and autism. Florida has the second-largest Alzheimer’s disease population in the U.S. with over 560,000 residents living with the disease. That number is projected to climb to 720,000 by 2025. Studies show that 60 percent or three of every five persons with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia will wander and go missing. The numbers are almost as high for children with autism. The American Pediatric Association states that 50 percent of children with autism will wander/elope and go missing at least once before age 17.

Scent Evidence K9 CEO Paul Coley has made it his mission to not only improve missing person response capabilities for communities but to protect individuals before they go missing. Coley created the Scent Preservation Kit® to provide responders with a pre-collected uncontaminated scent article before the search begins.

Seminole, Seminole, and Bay counties have already received their first deliveries of the Scent Kits for distribution. The kits are easy to use and only take a few minutes to complete. A person simply wipes the included gauze pad repeatedly around the neck or underarm area and places the pad in a specially treated jar. The jar is then sealed, labeled, and stored in a safe place in their home or adult care facility. If a person has wandered or goes missing, a family member or caregiver can present the kit to responders. This allows responders to begin searching immediately with the best possible scent source.

Coley and Scent Evidence K9 have also conducted Missing Person Response Protocol and Human Scent Discriminate K9 Training for the participating counties’ K-9 teams and responders. Coley has developed an effective system of standardized scent discriminate trailing techniques and scent collection methods that are producing higher success rates than traditional tracking practices. “We are seeing between 80 percent and 90 percent confirmed trail results using our program. It’s making a difference in creating safer communities and saving lives,” said Coley.

Coley is also a member of the Big Bend DCCI Task Force, and Scent Evidence K9 is a statewide partner of DOEA.
TRANSPORTATION

WALKING:
How you can utilize this triple threat to help your mood, wallet, and transportation plan

Gail M. Holley
Florida Department of Transportation

It’s an age-old recommendation: get your steps in. While most of us think of walking as only a form of exercise or recreation, it can also be a great way to get where you need to go. There’s no doubt that walking is good for you, but do you know the perks of walking that extend past your physical health?

Owning a vehicle can be expensive, with transportation often being the second largest expense in the household budget. Even if your car is paid off, costs such as gas, insurance, and maintenance still have to be taken into account. The Car Cost Worksheet found in “Florida’s Guide to Safe Mobility for Life” can help you calculate how much your car is costing you. For some, the cost is too great, and they would rather put the money elsewhere.

Being able to spend less time in your car, or not drive at all, also changes your relationship with your community. It has positive impacts on the environment and takes one more car out of traffic. By walking around your neighborhood, you also build relationships with your neighbors and are more likely to be active in your community.

If you live within a half a mile of your pharmacy, grocery store, doctor’s office, or anywhere else that’s on your radar, ditch the car and get to stepping! In doing so, you get your daily exercise, save some money, and reduce your carbon footprint. Walking is truly the triple threat that helps keep you active, mobile, and independent.

Keep in mind that where you live plays a role in how easy it is to incorporate walking into your transportation plan. In some areas, you may be able to walk straight to your destination. Other communities may require that you walk to a bus stop and then utilize public transit. That’s why it’s important to live in, and encourage the creation of, lifelong communities, where walking is encouraged as a transportation option.

The Safe Mobility for Life Coalition has put together the Lifelong Communities Transportation Checklist to help you identify how to choose your lifelong community. Some of the things to look for when searching for your community:

• Are grocery stores, pharmacies, medical offices, hospitals, schools, libraries, community centers, and places of worship located near one another and close to my home?
• Are there adequate sidewalks available to connect me to my destination(s)?
• Do I feel safe crossing at intersections/mid-block crossings?

Incorporating walking into your travel is easier than you think. The next time you leave your home, take a look around to see if there are any bus stops, stores, restaurants, shops, or parks nearby that you could travel to on foot. If so, challenge yourself to visit at least one of them every week.

If traveling by vehicle is your only option, choose to visit a larger shopping center where you can park your car and then walk from store to store instead of riding around. That way, you stay active while still getting everything you need. By exploring new options through walking, you may just find some new favorite spots. Where will your feet take you?

You can visit SafeMobilityFL.com to access the Car Cost Worksheet, Lifelong Communities Transportation Checklist and download your copy of “Florida’s Guide to Safe Mobility for Life.” If you don’t have access to a computer, you can also request these and other materials by contacting the Safe Mobility for Life Resource Center at 850-644-8426.

Older adults who live within walking distance of places that they need to go can benefit from walking to those destinations by getting exercise, saving money, and learning how to maintain their independence from beyond the driver’s seat.
Seniors Have a Stake in Transportation Plan

*Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance, M-CORES*

Secretary Kevin Thibault
Florida Department of Transportation

Florida’s population continues to grow at a rapid pace, as 900 people move to the Sunshine State each day. The fastest growing segment of that population? Citizens who are age 60 or older. In fact, by the year 2030, nearly one in three Floridians – 32.5 percent – will be 60 or older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

That growth means more vehicles on our state and local roadways. To meet these increasing travel demands and to plan for growth 20-25 years into the future, it’s critical that our state invests in transportation and other infrastructure. Our state leaders are doing just that – by embarking on the most significant expansion of Florida’s transportation system since the inception of the interstate program in the 1950s.

The Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance (M-CORES) program was created by Senate Bill 7068 and signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis in May 2019. The program identified three corridors that could help set the stage for Florida’s future:

- **SUNCOAST CONNECTOR**
  Citrus County to Jefferson County

- **NORTHERN TURNPIKE CONNECTOR**
  North end of Florida’s Turnpike to Suncoast Parkway

- **SOUTHWEST-CENTRAL FLORIDA CONNECTOR**
  Collier County to Polk County

This past summer, the Florida Department of Transportation kicked off the first steps for M-CORES – a 13-month evaluation phase. The purpose of the program is to do the following:

- Revitalize rural communities,
- Encourage job creation,
- Improve regional transportation connectivity,
- Create a robust multi-modal transportation infrastructure,
- Leverage technology to enhance the quality of life and public safety, and
- Protect the environment and natural resources.

The program tackles a host of pressing needs for many Floridians. The three M-CORES corridors could create opportunities to do the following:

- Help protect wildlife corridors and natural resources,
- Enhance and improve hurricane evacuation,
• Ease traffic congestion, and
• Expand and improve water and sewer services and connectivity.

The program also looks to find opportunities along the corridors for multi-use trails, freight and passenger rail, public transit and mobility as a service. These components could help improve the quality of life as more older Floridians seek ways other than driving to get around in their daily lives. Better Wi-Fi or broadband connections – especially in rural areas – also could improve emergency response and make it easier to stay in touch with loved ones.

Each M-CORES corridor has a Task Force made up of subject matter experts from state agencies, regional planning organizations, local governments, environmental protection groups, and other stakeholder groups. FDOT is holding Task Force meetings to gain local, regional, and statewide perspective on the various aspects of the program.

Each Task Force will submit recommendations to the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 1, 2020.

The Florida Department of Transportation places a high priority on strong public engagement during the M-CORES planning process. The goal is to work with businesses, organizations, and citizens throughout the corridors and the state to determine successful transportation solutions for everyone.

There are many ways for the public to provide input to the process. Floridians can do the following:

1. Visit the Florida M-CORES website, FloridaMCORES.com,
2. Call the Florida Department of Transportation offices in Tallahassee or throughout the state,
3. Send an email to FDOT.Listens@dot.state.fl.us,
4. Send a letter or postcard in the mail,
5. Appear at a task force meeting,
6. Attend workshops or town hall meetings (see schedule below), and
7. Provide public comment or submit a comment at one of our event kiosks.

The Department values all comments and continues to welcome feedback. Your participation is encouraged at the following M-CORES events:
Accessible Amenities at Florida State Parks

Office of Communications
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is committed to providing equal access for its more than 32 million state park visitors each year. DEP’s Florida Park Service works to provide reasonable accommodations so that all visitors, including those with disabilities, can be immersed in the park experience.

Everyone is encouraged to enjoy festivals and other special events, recreational opportunities, beaches and rivers, ranger programs, and so much more. Natural beauty and cultural resources are available year-round at Florida’s 175 state parks, trails, and historic sites.

Since its inception in 1935, the Florida Park Service has cultivated and celebrated a culture of inclusion. New buildings and facilities, and those that have been renovated, are designed and constructed to provide access for all.

It’s easy to identify the many parks that offer accessible amenities at FloridaStateParks.org.

Enjoy fishing or a picnic along the Atlantic coastline at Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach. Use the accessible boardwalks or reserve the beach wheelchair or non-slip access mat.

Oscar Scherer in Osprey and Topsail Hill Preserve in Santa Rosa Beach are among state parks that offer ADA accessible camping sites. Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Hobe Sound also offers an accessible canoe and kayak launch, a wheelchair-friendly ramp to the boat dock, and a wheelchair-friendly sidewalk.

Bird-watchers will not be disappointed at Myakka River State Park, a vast expanse near Sarasota where you can spot raptors, migratory birds, and wading birds. Enjoy the wildlife from the ADA birding platform or on a tram tour. Regular wheelchairs are available for use.

Enjoy the beauty and diversity of marine life at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo. Experience the park’s coral reef system on a wheelchair-friendly glass-bottom boat or snorkeling vessel. An electric scooter and regular wheelchairs are available.

Every park is different, so be sure to visit individual park pages for additional information. Visit a Florida State Park today and enjoy the Real Florida.
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)

Advantage Aging Solutions
2414 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308
850-488-0055
(Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla and Washington Counties)

Elder Options
100 SW 75th Street, #301
Gainesville, FL 32607
352-378-6649
(Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Lake, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Sumter, Suwannee and Union Counties)

ElderSource
10688 Old St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, FL 32257
904-391-6600
(Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia Counties)

Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Inc.
9549 Koger Boulevard North
Gadsden Building, Suite 100
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
727-570-9696
(Pasco and Pinellas Counties)

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

Senior Resource Alliance
3319 Maguire Boulevard, Suite 100
Orlando, FL 32803
407-514-1800
(Brevard, Orange, Osceola and Seminole 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)

Your 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
954-745-9779
(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.

Alabama........... 800-262-2243
Alachua............. 800-262-2243
Baker ................ 888-242-4464
Bay ................. 866-467-4624
Bradford ........... 800-262-2243
Brevard .......... 407-514-0019
Broward ........... 954-745-9779
Calhoun ............ 866-467-4624
Charlotte ........ 866-413-5337
Citrus ............. 800-262-2243
Collier ............ 866-413-5337
Clay ............... 888-242-4464
Collier ................ 866-413-5337
Columbia ........... 800-262-2243
DeSoto ............ 866-413-5337
Dixie ........... 800-262-2243
Duval ............ 888-242-4464
Escambia ........ 866-531-8011
Flagler ............. 888-242-4464
Franklin .......... 866-467-4624
Gadsden .......... 866-467-4624
Gilchrist ........ 800-262-2243
Glades............. 866-413-5337
Gulf ............. 866-467-4624
Hamilton ........ 800-262-2243
Hardee ........... 800-336-2226
Hendry ............ 866-413-5337
Hernando ........ 800-262-2243
Highlands ........ 800-336-2226
Hillsborough .... 800-336-2226
Holmes ............. 866-467-4624
Indian River ........ 866-684-5885
Jackson ........... 866-467-4624
Jefferson ........ 866-467-4624
Lafayette ........ 800-262-2243
Lake ................ 800-262-2243
Lee ............... 866-413-5337
Leon ................ 866-467-4624
Levy .............. 800-262-2243
Liberty .......... 866-467-4624
Manatee ........ 800-336-2226
Martin ............ 866-684-5885
Miami-Dade ........ 305-670-4357
Monroe ........... 305-670-4357
Nassau ............ 888-242-4464
Okaloosa .......... 866-531-8011
Okeechobee ......... 866-684-5885
Orange ........... 407-514-0019
Osceola ............ 407-514-0019
Palm Beach ........ 866-684-5885
Pasco ............ 727-217-8111
Pinellas ........ 727-217-8111
Polk ............... 800-336-2226
Putnam ............. 800-262-2243
Santa Rosa ........ 866-531-8011
Sarasota .......... 866-413-5337
Seminole .......... 407-514-0019
St. Johns ........ 888-242-4464
St. Lucie .......... 866-684-5885
Sumter ............. 800-262-2243
Suwannee ........ 800-262-2243
Taylor .......... 866-467-4624
Union ............... 800-262-2243
Volusia ........... 888-242-4464
 Wakulla .......... 866-467-4624
Washington ........ 866-531-8011

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).

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.

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.
On November 26, the Department of Elder Affairs and Elder Care Services hosted the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program at Kenwood Place in Tallahassee, Florida. As residents came down to fill out their application and pick up their box of fresh food, some grabbed a cup of coffee and played cards with their neighbors, and others chatted with staff from Elder Care Services and DOEA.

The Department passed out 55 boxes of fresh produce to eligible seniors in the apartment complex. The Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program provides low-income seniors in select counties with coupons that can be redeemed for locally grown, fresh fruits, vegetables, and other produce from participating farmers at local farmers’ markets. Seniors can apply for the program through their local lead Area Agency on Aging, in participating counties, and those eligible can receive $40 worth of coupons exchanged on a first-come, first-served basis beginning in April.

Once the time for the coupon redemption has ended, the program passes out boxes to those who are eligible for the service but did not receive coupons. The food distribution typically takes place in the fall around Thanksgiving. This is a great opportunity for seniors to get fresh food during the holiday season.

“The Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program is a great way to provide eligible seniors who live in participating counties with fresh produce. It also helps to support local farmers and farmers’ markets,” stated Nutrition Program Manager Dori Landsberg “This makes it a win for all involved!”

Elders age 60 and older with an income not exceeding 185 percent of the current federal poverty guidelines are eligible. Federal Poverty Guidelines are updated each year. To learn more about the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program and to learn whether you may be eligible, please visit elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/farmers_market.php.