

RESPECT FOR
YESTERDAY,
SUPPORT FOR
TODAY,
PLAN FOR
TOMORROW



Aging Matters

Spring 2021 Newsletter from the Illinois Department on Aging

Office of
Governor JB
Pritzker

Be Socially
Engaged While
Practicing
Social
Distancing

Find a Vaccine
Location Near
You

IDoA COVID-19
Vaccine
Resources

Looking For
Services?

Upcoming
Webinar

Message From Director Paula Basta



Every March since 1980, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics focuses attention on healthful eating through [National Nutrition Month®](#). Proper nutrition and hydration are vital. People who eat a well-balanced diet tend to be healthier with stronger immune systems and lower risk of chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. This year's theme, *Personalize Your Plate*, promotes creating nutritious meals to meet individuals' cultural and personal food preferences. Developing a healthful eating pattern is not a one-size-fits all endeavor. The key is tailoring our favorite foods to meet our individual nutrient needs. As part of National Nutrition Month®, the [Academy's website has resources](#) to spread the message of good nutrition and the importance of an overall healthy lifestyle for all. To assist in this effort, IDoA's nutritionist provides nutrition resources in compliance with federal guidelines to benefit older Illinoisans. Have you noticed a change in your loved one's appetite or weight? Now more than ever, we all need to look out for one another and make sure we have proper nutrition. Find out more about [IDoA's nutrition programs here](#).

Over the course of the past year, we know that while COVID-19 spared no group, it has impacted certain populations more than others. Throughout the pandemic, older adults and people of color have consistently been disproportionately [sickened and killed](#) by the virus.

With three COVID-19 vaccines on the market, availability is likely to increase and I am hopeful that older adults will soon be able to resume activities and gather safely. The end of the pandemic will be halting and gradual, but in the meantime, we must remain vigilant in our compliance with face coverings, social distancing, and limits to in-person gatherings as we **support today and plan for tomorrow**. The time is now for all of us to be [All In for Illinois](#) - and [#VaxUpIL](#) when it is your time!

#VaxUpIL - All in Illinois Campaign

IDoA, and our Aging Network continue to work diligently to ensure that the services and supports provided will not be interrupted. If you or an older family member, friend, or neighbor are in need of any kind of assistance, please know we are here to help you. Please [visit our website](#) or contact our **Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (hearing impaired call 888-206-1327)** or by email aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov.

[Read more messages from Director Basta](#)



#WomensHistoryMonth

March is Women's History Month - a time to reflect, commemorate, and encourage the celebration of the vital role of women - (in our case) - the Aging Network! We know that there are many women in our Aging Network who have

faced challenges, overcome great obstacles, and led by example, for others to emulate. For that, we commend you, and thank you all for your leadership and dedication! We would like to take a moment to highlight a few of our recognized leaders from around the state that have contributed to strengthening our Aging Network over the years.



**Carol Aronson, Social Service
Division Director
Shawnee Health Service and
Development Corporation**

38 years working in the Aging Network

I had no idea how deeply the work we do in the Aging Network would resonate with me, and provide what I have needed in my career. I am convinced ***the design of the Case Coordination Units in Illinois and the work we do was decades ahead of its time*** and continues to be the very best for older Illinoisans living in our communities across the State.

I am proud of my accomplishments, including designing the Shawnee Alliance Information System in 1985 - which became the Case Management Information System in 2000 and



**Meisha Lyons, Associate Vice
President Senior Services
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese
of Chicago**

23 years working in the Aging Network

My very first role in the Aging Network was that of a care coordinator on the South side of Chicago. I now lead a dynamic team of 263 aging professionals in Cook, Lake and McHenry Counties - providing services ranging from care coordination and adult protective services to caregiver support and home delivered meals.

It's an honor to assist older Illinoisans in ***aging safely, respectfully, and gracefully in the communities that they built for all of us.***

is still in use today statewide.



**Yolanda Curry, Deputy
Commissioner
Chicago Department of Family and
Support Services - Senior Services
Area Agency on Aging**

28 years working in the Aging Network

My grandfather, once told me; ***there will be a lot of things in life that you cannot control, but young lady, what you can control is your work ethic, your intent, your persistence, and how you treat others.*** This philosophy grounds me and embodies how I approach work and others.

Although my career path as a young person was unclear for some time, I now cannot see myself doing anything else than serving the Aging Network. I wake up every day with the goal of positively influencing older Illinoisans' quality of life and offering the opportunity for abundance. I believe in the tenets of the Older Americans Act and appreciate the local focus in creating a service network that is flexible, scalable and responsive to the needs of a diverse population of mature adults. I consider it both an honor and privilege to serve in the aging network.



**Diane Slezak, CEO and President
AgeOptions**

45 years working in the Aging Network

When I started working for the Suburban Cook County Area Agency on Aging, we had about 8 staff members based in an office in Chicago, and 223,000 older adults living in Cook County. We now have over 80 members on our team based in Oak Park, and over 550,000 older adults living in Cook County. The changes in service delivery has been dramatic.

As AgeOptions and the Aging Network grew, important programs were added to the portfolio of the Federal Older Americans Act. ***Much of our work could not be accomplished without the assistance from our area partners.*** I am privileged to be working with all of these incredible teams. Over the years, we have accomplished a lot, yet challenges still remain ahead. Make no mistake that together, we will continue to expand our services so that all of our older Illinoisans can thrive as they age.

Joint Summit Save the Date: 4/26 - 4/27

IDoA cordially invites you to a Joint Summit with [AARP of Illinois](#) and [RRF Foundation for Aging](#) entitled, Disrupt

Disparities: Advancing Racial Equity in Aging. This virtual summit, with national and state expert speakers and panelists, will occur April 26, 2:00 - 5:00 p.m., and April 27, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

**DISRUPT
DISPARITIES**

ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY IN AGING

EDUCATE. LEARN. CHANGE.

**A VIRTUAL SUMMIT ADDRESSING
CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS**

APRIL 26-27, 2021

Join state government leaders, legislators,



community leaders, policy experts, and philanthropic leaders as we address racial disparities in aging and identify potential actions towards racial equity.

To learn more about the Joint Summit, and the Disrupt Disparities Initiative on racial equity and aging, [click here](#).

To register for any and all sessions of the Summit, [click here](#). We hope you can join us!

Illinois Cares; Making Connections



The Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) have distributed over 1,100 connectivity and assistive devices to older adults and persons with disabilities who have been disproportionately affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, after receiving \$1.7 million from the federal Administration for Community Living in May.

Specifically, the funding was used to purchase technology devices; including iPads, tablets and internet / Wi-Fi / hotspot

access to combat social isolation and loneliness among older adults and individuals who are disabled. **The devices have applications like FaceTime, Zoom, mental stimulation and others so individuals can connect with family members and friends - which was especially important over the holiday season.** Devices were distributed throughout Illinois beginning in August.

Thanks to the Illinois Care Connections program, I was able to video chat with my daughter during the holidays. I would not have been able to do this if it wasn't for the generosity of the program. Thank you so much for assisting me during this difficult and different holiday season. - [Wanda, a senior from Illinois](#)

IDoA, the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP), and IDHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Rehabilitation Services worked to identify clients, customers, and participants who may be at risk of social isolation and would benefit from these devices.

Thank you to our Aging Network, employees, community partners, and others who have been supporting our older Illinoisans. We know that many have gone above and beyond during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and would like to share with all of you, the gratitude we have received from across Illinois.

[More of these personal accounts can be viewed here.](#)

“
Thank you for the wonderful gift of a new Android tablet and accessories. My surprise at receiving it in the mail really made it a great day for me. The Illinois Care Connections program is wonderful for seniors, it helps us stay connected to family and the world – making these long days of being in the house alone during the pandemic more enjoyable. Thank you once again for providing seniors this service and these opportunities to connect.
”

– Wanda, a senior from Kewanee



“
I can't thank Illinois Care Connections enough for supplying me with a tablet that I can utilize for Zoom calls with my church friends and family. The tablet has kept my mind busy during the past months, and has allowed me to access applications that I did not think were accessible to me before. Thank you so much Mercer County Senior Center and IDoA.
”

– Geraldine, a senior from Mercer County



Aging Network Stepping Up to Get Vax to Normal

"On a cold Sunday morning in February, I was greeted by Diane Slezak from [AgeOptions](#), and Debra Vershelde from [Aging Care Connections](#) in the parking lot. Behind our masks were huge smiles as we had not seen each other in person for almost a year; we bumped elbows as we made our way into the building. They came out to meet me for my visit to their pop-up vaccine distribution location in North Riverside. Now, there were other players that made this happen including [Oak Park River Forest Senior Services](#), [Solutions for Care](#), and [UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago](#), but I was humbled to witness Aging Network partnerships in action. Older adults from the area would approach the building, greeted by administrators, and ensured that their paperwork was in order. Once this was completed, they were escorted to a huge gymnasium where they waited for their shots. Some nursing assistants were drawing vaccine from the vials into the syringes on the main floor, and others were administering them in the different side meeting rooms. Once the shots were completed, residents were seated for 15 minutes, and then exited the side door to ensure that there was no unnecessary interaction with other people. At the end of the very long day, over 450 vaccinations were administered to older adults!



I can't do justice in words what I was able to witness. My heart was bursting with pride and joy to see the generosity of the human spirit; and I am extremely proud to tell you that this isn't the only pop-up clinic that the Aging Network has been able to put together. From [Elder Care Services](#) and their vaccine clinic held in DeKalb County, to the [Shawnee Alliance](#) and their vaccination efforts in Cairo and Cobden, the Aging Network continues to be strong and resilient. Partnership is a word

too easily used, and in these instances, we see the gold standard for this word. Make no mistake, the older Illinoisans who received the COVID-19 vaccines at these locations would not have received their shot if it were not for every organization who contributed their part. Furthermore, we saw good and tenacious government in action through the leadership of our Aging Network. Your relentlessness and ingenuity in pursuit of a solution is a shining example

[You can see some of our older Illinoisans as they #VaxUp here](#)



Spotlight on the Aging Network!

For over 40 years, the [Chinese American Service League's \(CASL\)](#) comprehensive programs have connected families and individuals in the Chicago Chinese community and beyond with the vital support they need.

Through a grant provided by the [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL), CASL is working to create and sustain a program that will provide high-quality, person-centered, culturally competent Alzheimer's disease services for its Chinese American older adult population. Either virtually or safely in person, they will educate the community in a culturally competent way and reduce the stigma connected to the disease; by building a dementia-capable Chinese American community and making it possible for community-dwelling Chinese American older adults living with dementia to lead a high-quality healthy life. The grant will also allow CASL to provide training for staff, with the aim of building a more dementia-capable workforce. [Click here to learn more!](#)

Additionally, our 13 Area Agencies on Aging, have partnered with [InstaShield LLC](#) and [RRF Foundation for Aging](#) to provide face shields free of charge to organizations throughout Illinois that provide direct in-home services to the state's older adults. Beginning earlier this year, more than 53,000 face shields were being delivered to more than 160 groups across the state that provide in-home services. Chicago-based RRF Foundation for Aging is providing support for the cost of transporting the shields to each group, and IDoA is grateful to AgeOptions for taking the lead in coordinating the partnership between InstaShield and our 13 Area Agencies on Aging. The staff at AgeOptions conducted a survey to determine the extent of the need and built a database to assist with this task. Our goal continues to be increasing our one-on-one in-home services, limiting the exposure to the virus in older adults, while also safely expanding the ability to closely monitor their well-being.

2021 Senior Hall of Fame Awards Deadline for nominations closes Tuesday, June 1

Exclusively for adults, 65 years of age and older, the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame Awards recognize adults and highlight the meaningful contributions they have made in Illinois. Posthumous nominees will also be considered. Award nominations are being accepted for the following categories:

- Community Service: awarded to Illinois senior citizens that have shown support for the general public and community-based programs in their area or at large.
- Education: awarded to Illinois senior citizens that have shown a dedication to instruction and the world of academia.
- Labor Force: awarded to Illinois senior citizens



- that have a record of accomplishment in their employment or professional career.
- Performance / Graphic Arts: awarded to Illinois senior citizens that have a commitment to health and the promotion of well-being or a record of accomplishment in artistic expression.

Nominate Someone Today

The Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1994 to honor Illinois residents ages 65 and older for their personal achievements in four separate categories. Since then, 125 people have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Good luck and Welcome!

It is with bittersweet emotion that IDoA announces that Regional Ombudsman, Cathy Weightman-Moore, has left the Ombudsman Program. Cathy has been promoted to Diocesan Director at Catholic Charities Diocese of Rockford effective January 4, 2021. Cathy has been with the Ombudsman Program for 31 years as the Regional Ombudsman. During her tenure as Regional Ombudsman, Cathy has served as a member of the Older Adult Services Advisory Committee (OASAC), Abuse Prevention Review Team (APRT) and the LTC Advisory Group. Cathy has served as a mentor to several Regional Ombudsman and as a historian for the Ombudsman Program. We will certainly miss Cathy and wish her well in her new role.



We would like to welcome Julie Schuppner to the LTCOP as the new Regional Ombudsman for PSA 01. Julie will be replacing Cathy Weightman-Moore. Julie has worked with the Rockford Ombudsman Program since 2016 and prior to that, she served as a volunteer for the Rockford Regional Ombudsman Program. Julie, we are happy to have you and we know you are going to do an amazing job!

[Learn more about our Long Term Care Ombudsman Program](#)

Items of Interest

[6 Ideas for Vacations Away from Crowds](#)

[7 Ways Your Gut Can Get You Stronger, Fitter, and Happier](#)

[10 Ways to Get Grandchildren Interested in Traditional Hobbies](#)

[Biggest Social Security Changes for 2021](#)

[The Case for Inclusion 2021](#)

[Countering the Stress and Loneliness of COVID-19](#)

[How to Grandparent a Child with Special Needs](#)

[How to Prevent Foggy Glasses While Wearing a Face Mask](#)

[How Years of Caregiving Led to Bankruptcy](#)

[Improve the Fit of Your Mask to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19](#)

[Mind Games: Brain Boosters for Older Adults](#)

[Scientists Investigate COVID-19 and Risk of Dementia](#)

[The Power of Intergenerational Connections](#)

[Three Most Dangerous Underlying Conditions for COVID-19](#)

[VIDEO: UNC Health: Pro Tip to Help Your Earloop Mask Fit More Tightly](#)

[Eldercare Locator](#)

[IDoA Senior HelpLine](#): 800-252-8966

[SAGE National LGBT Elder Hotline](#): 877-360-LGBT (5428)

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine** at (800) 252-8966; (888) 206-1327 (TTY)

