

COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON AGING 2021 BEST PRACTICES AWARDS

Established in 2006, the Best Practices Awards recognize and encourage the replication of model programs, particularly those that foster aging in place, livable communities and home and community-based services. With financial support from Dominion Energy, the Council encourages the development of these innovative programs.

2021 BEST PRACTICES AWARDS

FIRST PLACE (\$5,000): Bay Aging (BA) *Stable Foundations for Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness*. Focusing on housing as the foundation for successful outcomes of older adults, BA's housing opportunities provide safety and stability for older adults experiencing homelessness, ensuring that the plethora of support services can be maintained to increase positive outcomes.

BA has bridged the gap between Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and the homeless services' Continuum of Care (CoC) to provide diverse housing opportunities for people exiting homelessness. In 2018, BA's age- and income-restricted rental housing worked with the local homeless services' CoC, the Northern Neck Middle Peninsula Housing Coalition, to develop a homeless preference. BA was the first U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly owner/manager to be approved to implement a homeless preference in Virginia.

BA can quickly identify older adults experiencing homelessness and match the person to unique housing that meets their needs, limiting the amount of time that someone spends homeless, reducing trauma, and regaining health measures. Once transitioned into permanent housing, older adults benefit from health assessments, Meals on Wheels, employment training, assistance with mainstream resource applications, insurance counseling, and transportation. This multidisciplinary continuum is poised to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring, while supporting older adults at every stage of independence.

Since 2018, 31 new tenants have moved into BA's housing, and an additional 189 older adults have been served by BA's homeless response system. The average wait time for placement in BA rental housing currently is 59 days, a 25% decrease since 2018 when the program started. Of the 31 older adults served by BA's housing, only one has exited to an unknown location, evidence of sustained positive outcomes of tenants.

To contact Bay Aging: 5306 Old Virginia Street
 P.O. Box 610
 Urbanna, VA 23175-0610
 Toll-free: 1-866-758-2386
 <http://www.bayaging.org/>

SECOND PLACE AWARD (\$3,000): Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) *Friends in Schools Helping (FISH) Program*. JABA has been serving the needs of seniors and their families in Charlottesville and five surrounding counties for 45 years.

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Since 2004, FISH has been JABA's intergenerational school-based mentoring program that provides volunteer mentors to students who need individualized attention. The FISH program recruits, screens, and trains volunteers to help students with reading, math, writing, STEM, and art, as well as often working with English learner students and assisting children with their emotional well-being. Students working with FISH mentors demonstrate improved academic achievement, confidence, social skills, and trust.

FISH mentors now serve all across JABA's service area, including Charlottesville City and Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson counties. The FISH program serves students in a variety of settings, but due to COVID-19, mentoring moved to a virtual format with one-on-one or small groups. During the 2019-2020 school year, 58 FISH volunteers provided support to over 1,370 students in 21 schools, and reported providing over 2,250 hours of individualized mentoring attention to students, a value of over \$61,000 to the local communities. Looking ahead, the FISH program is excited to welcome 22 new volunteers and several returning FISH volunteers to provide vital support to students during the pandemic.

To contact JABA: 674 Hillside Drive
Suite 9
Charlottesville, VA 22901-1799
Phone: 434-817-5222
<http://www.jabacares.org>

THIRD PLACE AWARD (\$2,000): Inova Health System Medical House Calls (MHC)

Program. The MHC program provides in-home primary care services to older adults above the age of 65 and who are homebound. MHC opened its doors in 2017 and has continued to expand the provision of quality in-home care services to our community ever since.

MHC's mission is to allow older adults to receive care in their most comfortable environment, their homes. This also helps to support caregivers, reduce caregiver burden, and increase the overall wellness of patients and their support system. Through an interdisciplinary model, patients receive quality medical care, including coordination of in-home diagnostic testing and wraparound services such as social work support. The MHC program currently serves approximately 700 older adults throughout most of Fairfax County, Alexandria, and areas in eastern Loudoun County.

In 2020, MHC performed just under 9,000 encounters with patients. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MHC program has seen an extensive increase in in-home care services. Between January-March 2021, the Medical House Calls program administered 1,260 doses of the COVID vaccine resulting in a total of 655 vaccinated homebound older adults and family caregivers in our community. Looking ahead, the MHC program will soon be expanding to support Medicaid patients and uninsured members in the community, building on a steadfast commitment to ensuring that all community members have access to quality healthcare regardless of their ability to pay.

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To contact Inova MHC: 2700 Prosperity Ave, Suite 270
Fairfax, VA 22301
Phone: 703-698-2431

<https://www.inova.org/our-services/senior-services-inova/medical-house-calls>

2021 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia (SSSEVA) *The Art of Healthy Aging*: Hosted since 2014, The Art of Healthy Aging Forum & Expo® brings together 600+ seniors and 100+ sponsors and vendors for a five-hour period at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The live event components traditionally includes an exhibition hall featuring 60-70+ vendors, a “Salute to Caregivers” recognition, and a series of concurrent workshops that provide older adults and caregivers in SSEVA’s coverage region information, programs, and resources to promote healthy, active aging in their own homes and communities.

Pivoting in response to the pandemic, and with the support of corporate sponsors, SSEVA turned event into a virtual three-part series, with episodes airing approximately two weeks apart between mid-August and the end of September. Each of the three virtual episodes (30-40 minutes) consisted of: A Welcome by our CEO; three to four expert speakers; one interactive movement option; and musical entertainment. The videos were shared on SSEVA’s website and multiple internet platforms, including VIMEO, YouTube, and Facebook, as well as via cable television through partnerships with multiple city public access stations throughout SSEVA’s service area, which ran each video multiple times after the initial air dates.

The impact of the live Art of Healthy Aging Forum & Expo® has grown in its first six years, from 250 persons in 2014 to 600 seniors and caregivers at the last live event in the fall of 2019. In its seventh year (2020) and its first year as a virtual event, that reach more than tripled to at least 2,204 non-duplicative households across multiple platforms including digital and public access television.

To contact SSEVA: Interstate Corporate Center, Building 5
6350 Center Drive, Suite 101
Norfolk, VA 23502-4101
Phone: 757-461-9481
<http://www.ssseva.org/>

Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services and ServiceSource Inc. *Virtual Center for Active Adults (VCAA)*: When the pandemic began, the Fairfax County senior centers closed in March 2020. In an effort to combat isolation and support positive social connections during this time, the VCAA was initiated through a partnership of 20 government agencies and non-profits, led by one

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county agency (Neighborhood and Community Services) and one community-based organization (ServiceSource).

The VCAA is a virtual platform that offers older adults, caregivers, and people with disabilities access to live classes, on-demand programs, and self-directed activities, and provides COVID-19 information and referral supports. The VCAA encourages older adults to join live, interactive programs and engage with other older adults while also offering prerecorded videos on demand for older adults to watch on their own schedules. Staff doing Wellness Checks call and check in on participants. Additional resources and information needed to support older adults' overall health, wellbeing, and aging in place are provided. VCAA is a free resource that allows the older adult community to stay safely and actively connected during COVID-19 and beyond.

The VCAA has had 1,509 group activities have been led since starting the virtual center and served 27,514 (duplicated count) virtual center participants, reaching an average of over 4,300 page views per month. An overwhelming majority of participants report that they felt participating in the VCAA impacted their: involvement in meaningful and healthy activities, connection to the community, and knowledge of available services in the area. Through the partnership, the VCAA team continues to enhance social and recreational opportunities for people in the community and welcomes individuals of varying abilities to join.

To contact NCS: 12011 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Phone: 703-324-4600
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/neighborhood-community-services/>

To contact ServiceSource Inc.: 10467 White Granite Drive
Oakton, VA 22124
Phone: 703-970-3636
<https://www.servicesource.org/>

Appalachian Area for Senior Citizens (AASC) Home Repair Program: AASC's Home Repair Program performs essential repairs to homes of older adults, disabled individuals and their families to attain or maintain a safe living environment and allows them to stay in their homes as long as possible with dignity and grace. Repairs range from roofs, heat pumps, and installing ramps to showers and other bathroom improvements, repairing floors and other such renovations.

With a Class C licensed contractor on staff, AASC leverages partnerships with Clinch Independent Living Services, Rural Development, Appalachian Service Project, local departments of social services, and local churches, as well as funding from the Older Americans Act, private donations, in-kind labor, and when possible, the USDA Rural Development Program, as well as other sources to complete the projects.

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Since 2018, 50 projects have been completed, including 28 ramps constructed, 18 heat pumps replaced, 10 shower installations, 10 roofs replaced, 31 bathroom modifications, 9 porch and step repairs, 9 floor repairs, 4 sewage repairs, 5 mobile home roofs sealed, and 6 water heaters installed. Due to high demand, the Home Repair Program maintains a waiting list of individuals needing services.

To contact AASC: 216 College Ridge Road
Wardell Industrial Park
P.O. Box 765
Cedar Bluff, VA 24609-0765
Toll-free: 1-800-656-2272
<http://www.aasc.org/>

Arlington Agency on Aging (AAA) *Calling Angels Friendly Caller Program*: To help address food insecurity and isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, AAA, in partnership with Meals on Wheels Arlington, Meals on Wheels America, and Hilton Hotels, launched Calling Angels, a Friendly Caller program that provides meaningful connections to homebound and isolated older adults.

Prior to the pandemic, Meals on Wheels (MOW) delivered meals each weekday, but to help protect participants and volunteers, deliveries shifted to once per week. As many know, the MOW program is more than a meal; for many participants it is a lifeline and connection to the community. Social isolation and loneliness had been an ongoing concern for older adults prior to the pandemic, but with stay at home orders, technology needs, and limitations on travel, older adults were disproportionately impacted.

Through these invaluable partnerships, the Hilton Hotels Hospitality team was trained, and 40 Hilton staff began making calls to 90 MOW participants. For some participants, this conversation may be the only contact they receive. Volunteers help older adults remain engaged, valued and connected.

Since April 2020, volunteers and Hilton staff have made hundreds of phone calls to over 120 older adults. AAA has also engaged with area agencies on aging in Atlanta and San Diego to help them launch similar programs with their local MOW and Hilton hotels.

To contact AAA: 2100 Washington Boulevard, 4th Floor
Arlington, VA 22204
Phone: 703-228-1700
www.arlingtonva.us/aging

Senior Connections, The Capitol Area Agency on Aging *Benefits Enrollment Center*: Launched in 2019, the Benefits Enrollment Center (BEC) at Senior Connections helps Medicare beneficiaries enroll in benefit programs for which they are eligible. Trained staff assist in determining eligibility and applying for benefits that include Low Income Subsidy (LIS), Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs), Medicaid,

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Lifeline, and more.

Traditionally, Benefit Outreach Specialists have traveled throughout our area to assist clients rather than them having to come to us. During the quarantine period, however, Senior Connections pivoted to electronic and telephone contact. Clients can be referred to the BEC through a partner or as a self-referral. Referrals are received by phone, email, through our website and electronically through PeerPlace, a secure case management system. Upon receipt of a referral a Benefits Enrollment Specialist will reach out to a client to screen them for all possible benefits. If a client is determined to potentially be eligible for any benefit, the BEC will complete an application as well as provide support and follow-up through the determination and renewal process.

The BEC has established telephonic translation services through a language services provider to offer efficient service to individuals whose primary language is not English.

From January 1, 2019 until projected September 30, 2021, the BEC have assisted or will assist 1,150 individuals with 1,983 applications reaping more than \$3,300,000 in benefits.

To contact Senior Connections: 24 E Cary Street
Richmond, VA 23219-3796
Local: 804-343-3000
Toll-free: 1-800-989-2286
BEC intake line: 804-672-4484
<http://www.seniorconnections-va.org>

Volunteer Solutions' (VS) Virtual Social Visitor Program: This program provides opportunities for volunteers to engage in social visits with older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers. The program pivoted in response to the pandemic, and since late March 2020, volunteers have been conducting virtual social visits by phone or video conference technology instead of the previous in-person visits. VS has answered a community call to address isolation in the Fairfax area, specifically among participants of senior centers and adult day health centers and residents of nursing facilities. From October 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021, the VS virtual social visits program has served 88 participants. In addition to the virtual social visits, VS incorporated a new "Caring Cards" opportunity. Volunteers, including two Girl Scout troops, write generic cards and notes to the Fairfax County's senior center participants who have only had access to virtual programming during the pandemic. Senior center staff then attach the cards and notes to the participants' meals that are delivered each week. Since inception, over 650 cards have been shared with over 160 participants.

To contact VS: 12011 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Phone: 703-324-5406
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/older-adults/volunteer-solutions>