



News Release

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2022 BEST PRACTICES AWARDS

(RICHMOND, Va.) — NV Rides, a program started in 2014, has won the \$5,000 first place Best Practices Award from the Commonwealth Council on Aging. The program serves as a network of volunteer rides programs serving seniors and persons with disabilities in Northern Virginia.

NV Rides supports volunteer transportation through coordination of rides, marketing, software, and volunteer recruitment and background checks provided to partner organizations.

In 2021, NV Rides' partners served 926 seniors with a network of 506 drivers and more than 20,377 rides, deliveries and visits. Since its inception, NV Rides has provided more than 60,000 rides and visits.

“We at NV Rides and our partners throughout Northern Virginia are honored to be recognized by the council for our network of rides programs that provide essential services to non-driving seniors – transportation,” said Emily Braley, NV Rides manager. “At first glance, NV Rides looks like a transportation partnership, but it really goes beyond driving – the simple act of driving someone can foster relationships and engage seniors in their communities. Volunteers and riders forge unique bonds and enable seniors to age in place.”

Since the pandemic, NV Rides pivoted by adding deliveries of essential items like groceries and medications.

The council advises the governor and General Assembly on issues affecting the 1.9 million Virginians age 60 and older and acknowledges organizations whose innovative programs can be replicated across the commonwealth. The council judges nominees on seven criteria, including community impact, potential for replication, innovation, outcomes and promotion of aging in the community.

The second place award of \$3,000 honored a partnership between Virginia Tech and the New River Valley Agency on Aging to virtually pair students and other volunteers from Virginia Tech

with older adults in Blacksburg and the New River Valley. Started during the pandemic, COVID Companions has helped curb social isolation while improving students' perceptions of aging and older adults.

The third place award of \$2,000 recognized Deaf Seniors Stay Connected, a program from the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. The program provides a free online chat program to connect deaf seniors with American Sign Language college students/interpreters from several Mid-Atlantic states to converse and engage weekly.

The following programs also received honorable mentions:

- Pop-Up Farmers Markets by Arlington Agency on Aging
- Caregiving at a Glance Workshop and Caregiver Cohort by Insight Memory Care Center
- Leveraging Technology to Combat Isolation during a Pandemic and Beyond by Mountain Empire Older Citizens
- Regional Transportation Collaborative by Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission and Aging Together
- Senior Ambassadors by Senior Services of Alexandria
- "SILENCE ISN'T GOLDEN," a Public Education and Awareness Campaign about Elder Abuse by Southwest Virginia Legal Aid/Southwest Virginia Elder Justice Task Force
- The Thelma Bland Watson Person-Centered PCA School by The Longevity Project for a Greater Richmond

"Throughout the COVID crisis, older Virginians and caregivers in the commonwealth continue to demonstrate resilience in response to exceptional circumstances. The council awards and recognitions today provide a spotlight on the innovative work done to combat issues faced by older adults, such as social isolation, transportation and housing inequities," said Council Best Practices Committee Chair Jennifer Disano. "I offer sincere congratulations to all of the Best Practice Awardees and Honorable Mentions as well as thanks to all of the program applicants."

Established in 2006, the Best Practices Awards recognizes and encourages the replication of model programs, particularly 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.

The department will plan a virtual webinar and reception to highlight the 2022 winners. The council and winners are also discussing possible in-person recognition ceremonies to be held later this spring. To learn more about this year's Best Practices Award winners or the Commonwealth Council on Aging, please visit <https://vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils.htm>.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or follow DARS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vadars or Twitter at @vadars.