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2021 BEST PRACTICES AWARDS

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Stable Foundations for Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness, a program started in 2018 by Bay Aging in Urbanna, won the $5,000 first place Best Practices Award from the Commonwealth Council on Aging. The program offers safe housing options and support services for older adults transitioning from homelessness.

Bay Aging has moved 31 new tenants into housing and served 189 older adults with its homeless response system since 2018. The average wait time for placement is currently 61 days, down 25 percent in two years.

"Since Bay Aging added its homeless solutions programs to its wheelhouse of support services, I have witnessed older adults discover dignity that had been lost through the traumas of homelessness. Bay Aging Apartments and the many services brought to the table works wonders to help tenants regain their health, increase self-sufficiency and find a sense of community," said Kathy Vesley, Bay Aging president and CEO.

The Commonwealth Council on Aging advises the governor 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 Friends in Schools Helping program from the Jefferson Area Board for Aging. Established in 2004, FISH is an intergenerational school-based mentoring program that provides volunteer mentors to students who need individualized attention.

During the 2019-2020 school year, 58 FISH volunteers provided support to more than 1,370 students in 21 schools, providing over 2,250 hours of individualized mentoring attention to students, a value of over $61,000 to local communities.

The third place award of $2,000 recognized Inova Health System's Medical House Calls program. MHC provides in-home primary care to homebound adults over age 65 in parts of Northern Virginia. In 2020, MHC performed nearly 9,000 patient visits and in 2021, vaccinated 655 older adults and caregivers.

The following programs also received honorable mentions:
- The Art of Healthy Aging Forum & Expo by Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, Norfolk
- Virtual Center for Active Adults by Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services and ServiceSource, Fairfax
- Home Repair Program by Appalachian Area for Senior Citizens, Cedar Bluff
- Calling Angels Friendly Caller Program by Arlington Agency on Aging
- Benefits Enrollment Center by Senior Connections, The Capitol Area Agency on Aging, Richmond
- Virtual Social Visitor Program by Volunteer Solutions, Fairfax

"The pandemic disproportionately affected older Virginians in so many heartbreaking ways. Not only did we experience so much tragic illness and loss of life, older Virginians became immeasurably isolated from their families, friends and community supports. Many of the Best Practices Awards and Honorable Mentions leveraged technologies and communities to help older Virginians stay connected and receive the support they needed," said Council Best Practices Committee Chair Kathryn Reid.

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.

In lieu of in-person recognition ceremonies at this time, the agency will plan a virtual webinar and reception to highlight the 2021 winners. To learn about this year's Best Practices Award winners and honorable mentions or the Commonwealth Council on Aging, please visit https://vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils.htm.

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