Looking Back at 2020

2020 certainly was a year we won’t soon forget! As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic Aging Ahead, along with many other organizations, needed to shift how we deliver support to older adults and their caregivers in St Louis, St Charles, Jefferson and Franklin counties. To help ensure the safety and well-being of our staff, clients, and volunteers our Emergency Operations Plan was implemented in mid-March and critical services continued to be provided to our community's most vulnerable, at-risk population. In addition, our dedicated and, yes, essential staff was able to quickly develop and implement a variety of new services to help combat social isolation among seniors. Many other plans we had for 2020 were adjusted to align with CDC guidelines, including our Choice programming, senior center activities, 2020 Census Awareness Campaign, Miles for Meals 5k, Voter Education Project and much more. In this edition, we hope you will enjoy learning more about how Aging Ahead remained focused on supporting individuals through the journey of aging in a year filled with challenges and heartache. As we hope for a brighter 2021, we thank our staff, volunteers, supporters, and community for being there for one another. We are grateful to be Aging Ahead with all of you!

January 2020
• Jefferson/Franklin County Personal Care Closet

February 2020
• 2020 Census Project Roll Out

March 2020
• Spring into Support Campaign
• Covid Pandemic Impacts Service Delivery
• Senior Center Closed until Further Notice
• Aging Ahead Activated its Emergency Operations Plan
• Emergency Meals Delivery Program has a Zero Contact Delivery System
• Emergency Supply Bank

April 2020
• Updated Telephone Reassurance Program Implemented
• Toilet Paper Distribution Program Created
• CyberSeniors Launches Online Webinars

May 2020
• GiveSTL Day results in 34 Generous Donations
• First CHOICE Zoom Presentation

July 2020
• Famers Market Pop-Up
• Senior Centers Create Online Activities
• SHL Distributions Voter Education Information

August 2020
• Connections Ahead Program Pilot Launches

September 2020
• Whiskers on Wheels Pilot Launches

October 2020
• Voting Education Project—SHL
• Virtual 5K Raises Funds and Awareness

November 2020
• Collaborative Virtual Series Starts
New Volunteer Opportunities

I hope this finds you all safe and well. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the health and well-being of our participants, volunteers, and staff remain our top priority. In order to comply with our Emergency Operations Plan, most volunteer opportunities were put on hold in March, 2020. We know our current volunteers and so many interested in becoming volunteers have been anxious to learn about how to help.

I’m excited to share with our community new volunteer opportunities. Currently, we are seeking volunteer drivers to support our Whiskers on Wheels pet program. This new program, funded by a grant from Meals on Wheels America, helps support older adults who struggle to pay for pet food. We are also seeking volunteer drivers to deliver donated incontinence products to area senior centers and clients in need. In addition, we will soon be offering a Volunteer Friendly Caller program that will connect volunteers to seniors looking to receive check-in phone calls. If any of the above programs are of interest to you, please email me, Laura Conners, at lconners@agingahead.org or call 636-207-4204.

Aging Ahead appreciates the dedication, passion, talents, and skills our volunteers bring as we collectively support individuals through the journey of aging. Thank you for helping us make the very best of this new year.

Stay well, Laura

Most Popular Words of 2020 Word Search

On March 22, 1972, President Nixon signed into law a measure that amended the Older Americans Act of 1965 and established a national nutrition program for seniors. For nearly 50 years, senior nutrition programs like ours have delivered more than just nutritious meals to seniors at risk of hunger and isolation in virtually every community across the country. We’ve also delivered friendly visits and made sure our seniors are safe in their own homes, where they want to be.

Programs from across the country have celebrated the month of March since 2002 to increase awareness for Meals on Wheels and recruit the support needed to meet rising demand. To learn more about and support Meals on Wheels, visit www.agingahead.org
Although 2020 was a “ruff” year for everyone, one of the programs we piloted last year made a purrrfectly wonderful impact for several in our community. Through a grant funded by Meals on Wheels America, Aging Ahead partnered with local nonprofit, The Wet Nose Project (TWNP), to help alleviate the cost burden of caring for pets by implementing a small pilot program, Whiskers on Wheels. The Wet Nose Project had a specific interest in partnering with Aging Ahead after delivering pet food to a Meals on Wheels (MOW) recipient who admitted running out of pet food and feeding her furry friend with her MOW meal. When Tracy, with TWNP shared this story with us, we knew this partnership was needed by the community we serve. Whiskers on Wheels was piloted to MOW recipients living in House Springs, Affton, South County, and St. Clair. Overall, the program helped 79 individuals and 99 pets (61 dogs, 37 cats, and 1 bird)! Along with monthly pet food deliveries, Whiskers on Wheels also provided learning materials for participants on how to better care for their furry friends. The Wet Nose Project also helped facilitate a successful shelter adoption to one of our participants, “I lost my dog two years ago from cancer. When I found out about this program, I asked about adoption and was led to the sweetest rescue Chihuahua called Willow. I am so grateful to this program for helping me and Willow. I am smiling again!” Survey results showed participants in the Whiskers on Wheels program feel less lonely thanks to their pets. The surveys also showed a significant decrease in stress and strain on their budgets by participating in the program. Notably, more than 30% of participants said that their pets help them feel more connected to others and that is news that makes us all want to wag our tails. If you would like to donate or volunteer to support Aging Ahead and critical programs like Whiskers on Wheels, please visit us at for more information on The Wet Nose Project, please visit: https://wetonoseproject.org/

Virtual 5k Races After Senior Hunger

While many things changed in 2020, some things remained constant: the ongoing support needed by so many older adults and the unwavering determination of our Foundation Board to help us meet those needs! In order to align with health and safety guidelines, the 2020 Edward Jones and Aging Ahead Miles for Meals 5k was held virtually. Thanks to 142 participants and the generous sponsors of the event, over $9,000 was raised for our Meals on Wheels program. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors for helping us deliver a difference to homebound older adults:

Edward Jones, Essence Health Care, Cape Albion Lakeside Retirement, Assistance Home Care, Comprehensive Benefits, Homestead Financial Mortgage, ARC point Labs of St Louis

Stay tuned as plans for our 4th annual 5k are being finalized www.agingahead.org. Thank You All!
Marketplace Insurance Open Enrollment Period
Extended through May 15

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is announcing that the Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for the Health Insurance Marketplace® will officially be available to consumers in the 36 states that use the HealthCare.gov platform on Monday, February 15, and will continue through Saturday, May 15. At least 13 States plus the District of Columbia, which operate their own Marketplace platforms, have decided to offer a similar opportunity, including Missouri.

If you have questions or need assistance, call 636-207-0847 or email COS@agingahead.org.

Virtual Activities

We are excited to share our Senior Centers have started planning virtual activities. These can be found on our website under the Community Locations tab. (www.agingahead.org/community-locations/) Each center has different activities, so check out their calendars. Activities include museum tours, guest speakers, exercise classes and so much more. We look forward to welcoming you at any virtual event that interests you! Please contact the center hosting the activities if you have questions.

Silver Haired Legislature News

The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) met virtually in October 2020 and has announced the Five Advocacy Priorities for 2021.

- Reinstate Funding to MoRx Program.
- Missouri State Sales Tax on Internet Purchases.
- Increase State Excise Tax on Tobacco from $0.17 to $1.81.
- Money Recouped by MO HealthNet to be Earmarked for Return to MO HealthNet.
- Missouri State Income Tax Credits for ‘Aging in Place’ Home Remodels.

RESOLUTION: The Missouri SHL Would Like to Express Gratitude to All Essential Workers During the Pandemic.** The Silver Haired Legislature is composed of citizens, age 60 or older, who volunteer their time to advocate on behalf of Missouri’s older adults. If you would like more information, please email jkeith@agingahead.org or call 636-207-0847.

The Silver Haired Legislature works in coordination with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services.

Virtual Activities

We are excited to share our Senior Centers have started planning virtual activities. These can be found on our website under the Community Locations tab. (www.agingahead.org/community-locations/) Each center has different activities, so check out their calendars. Activities include museum tours, guest speakers, exercise classes and so much more. We look forward to welcoming you at any virtual event that interests you! Please contact the center hosting the activities if you have questions.

Silver Haired Legislature News

The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) met virtually in October 2020 and has announced the Five Advocacy Priorities for 2021.

- Reinstate Funding to MoRx Program.
- Missouri State Sales Tax on Internet Purchases.
- Increase State Excise Tax on Tobacco from $0.17 to $1.81.
- Money Recouped by MO HealthNet to be Earmarked for Return to MO HealthNet.
- Missouri State Income Tax Credits for ‘Aging in Place’ Home Remodels.

RESOLUTION: The Missouri SHL Would Like to Express Gratitude to All Essential Workers During the Pandemic.** The Silver Haired Legislature is composed of citizens, age 60 or older, who volunteer their time to advocate on behalf of Missouri’s older adults. If you would like more information, please email jkeith@agingahead.org or call 636-207-0847.

The Silver Haired Legislature works in coordination with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services.

Silver Haired Legislature News

The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) met virtually in October 2020 and has announced the Five Advocacy Priorities for 2021.

- Reinstate Funding to MoRx Program.
- Missouri State Sales Tax on Internet Purchases.
- Increase State Excise Tax on Tobacco from $0.17 to $1.81.
- Money Recouped by MO HealthNet to be Earmarked for Return to MO HealthNet.
- Missouri State Income Tax Credits for ‘Aging in Place’ Home Remodels.

RESOLUTION: The Missouri SHL Would Like to Express Gratitude to All Essential Workers During the Pandemic.** The Silver Haired Legislature is composed of citizens, age 60 or older, who volunteer their time to advocate on behalf of Missouri’s older adults. If you would like more information, please email jkeith@agingahead.org or call 636-207-0847.

The Silver Haired Legislature works in coordination with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services.
Questions about your Pension Benefits? South Central Pension Rights Project can help. “I had been receiving a monthly benefit from my late husband’s pension for 23 years. Then the pension plan suddenly decided I was no longer eligible for it. The pension counseling project helped me get my pension back. I don’t know what I would have done without their help.” said Doris D, an 85 year old widow. A predictable and secure pension provides peace of mind and improves your life in many ways. Pension income increases your financial freedom and expands your choices for enhanced health, nutrition, living conditions, and overall independence well beyond retirement age. The South Central Pension Rights Project provides assistance free of charge to anyone with a pension question or problem regardless of age, income or value of the claim. They can also assist in finding pensions you may not realize you have earned. Their attorneys and paralegals provide services over the phone or by mail. You are eligible if you currently live or work (or have ever lived or worked) in Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas or Oklahoma while earning the pension. Also, you are eligible if the company or pension plan is headquartered or has operations now within those states. Call 1-800-443-2528 to speak with the South Central Pension Rights Project or go online at www.southcentralpension.org.

CHOICE Sponsorship Opportunity
YOU can Help
Support Aging Ahead’s efforts to provide new and exciting programs by becoming a CHOICE sponsor. CHOICE sponsorships are available for a low minimum contribution of $100 per presentation.

Visit www.agingahead.org/get-involved/sponsorships/choice-sponsorship to sign up today!

South Central Pension Rights Project
Alex

Upcoming CHOICE Presentations
Register by emailing jsotomayor@agingahead.org

CHOICE is offering on-line ZOOM presentations. Presentations can be viewed on a desktop, laptop, tablet or smart phone. Audio is through your device’s speakers or you can call-in on the telephone to hear the presenter. This will be a learning experience for everyone. We hope you will join us soon!

Eat Smart, Live Strong
March 1, 8  15, 22

Chair Yoga
March 5 & 19

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer’s Disease
March 29

Chair Yoga
April 5 & 19

Hidden Gems
April 9

Cooking with Herbs
April 12

Ways to Improve Memory
April 23

Don’t Worry, Pee Happy!
April 26

Brain Fitness
May 3

Medical Marijuana 101
May 10

Health Benefits of Volunteering
May 17

Decreasing Inflammation with Food
May 24

Recognizing Elder Abuse
June 21

Not a CHOICE member, not a problem. You can sign up for this FREE program in minutes at www.agingmissouri.org.
COVID Vaccine Information
Get Answers

Although initial tiers within Phase 1B are being activated today, there are currently not enough vaccines for everyone included in these groups. As additional supplies arrive, this activation will allow for the greatest vaccine coverage where it is most needed. It will also allow vaccinators and organizations to continue planning effectively for future tiers and phases.

Individuals in Phase 1B – Tier 2 should contact their local pharmacy or health care provider or visit MOStopsCovid.com to learn when vaccines may be available and how to receive them. Individuals in Phase 1A and Phase 1B – Tier 1 should work through their employer and/or association to access the vaccine.

A list of vaccinators and regional vaccine implementation teams will be made available at MOStopsCovid.com. For help registering online with the state navigator or with local public health entities, please call Aging Ahead at 636-207-4209. Aging Ahead cannot help you get the vaccine sooner or ensure you will receive a vaccine by registering on a particular site.

GET CONNECTED

Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) hotline is operated by medical professionals to provide guidance regarding COVID-19, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-877-435-8411

United Way 2-1-1 is a 24/7 connection to agencies and resources near you. Resources include food pantries, meals, utility assistance, transportation, home health care, veteran services and much more. 1-800-427-4626

Community Action Agency of St. Louis County (CAASTLC) provides services, such as, rent/mortgage assistance, energy and utility assistance, food pantry and case management. 314-863-0015.