

## **GACA Report for August, 2022 AZ4A Board Chair, Mary Beals Luedtka**

Greetings; thank you for giving the Area Agency on Aging Directors the opportunity to be with you during these meetings and bring to you updates on the status of services provided by the AAA's across the State.

### **Legislative updates**

AZ4A's (the State Association of Area Agencies on Aging) priority was to obtain \$1.5 Million in on-going funding for home and community-based services. Both HB 2528 and SB 1536 were bills that championed this priority. The bills passed and became part of the budget reconciliation bill resulting in \$1 M of on-going funding and \$2 Million of one- time funding. These funds come in addition to \$1 Million on- going funding for HCBS and \$1 Million on-going for Ombudsman appropriated last year.

### **Challenges**

Overall challenges for all the agencies are:

- 1) The AAA's were sent a template for our next four- year plan. The AAA's reviewed the Area Plan procedures sent to them and in doing so composed a letter in response to the Department highlighting concerns in process and objectives. We look forward to working with DAAS to align the objectives to fit the needs of older adults in our respective regions.
- 2) Lack of DCW's (Direct Care Workers)
- 3) Staff shortages within the AAA's
- 4) Increased aging population in Arizona (University of Arizona Eller College of Business shows that from 2010 – 2019 the population in Arizona over the age of 65 has increased by 48.4%, the largest growth in all of the different segments, i.e. Under 18 grew .07%; total population increased 13.9%)
- 5) Increased demand for services
- 6) Increased food and fuel prices and limited availability of certain products.
- 7) Mental health and social isolation.
- 8) Emergency preparation for older adults – Prepping for weather risks, such as: wildfires, heatwaves, floods, storms, etc.
- 9) Affordable housing
- 10) Increased homelessness in older adults

### **Misc. Updates:**

#### **Region ONE Maricopa County**

The Agency received notice on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, that it had been fully re-accredited through the Council on Accreditation. We have been continuously accredited since 2006. Programs that were accredited this cycle were Benefits Assistance, Care Directions, DOVES, ElderVention, Family Caregiver, MOSAIC Elder Refugee, and the 24-hour Senior HELP LINE. The accreditation also gives the Agency deemed status with the Arizona Department of Health Services for its behavioral health program.

On June 15<sup>th</sup>, for World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), Agency staff visited 13 senior centers throughout Maricopa County and presented to over 380 staff, volunteers, and older adults. To honor the theme of "lets tackle elder abuse," 114 tackle boxes with Agency educational materials inside were raffled off. Elder abuse postcards, posters and flyers were created and distributed and information about WEAAD was advertised in weekly and monthly publications.

At the USAging Conference in July, the Agency's EMPOWER program won an Aging Innovation Award. EMPOWER was developed through a collaboration between the Agency and research group, Urban Institute. The goal of the program is to build resilience in older adults so they may protect themselves from abuse. This is accomplished through weekly visits with a social worker where topics such as physical, social, emotional, and financial health are discussed. Mary Lynn Kasunic and Melissa Elliott also presented on the program at the conference.

## **Region II Pima Council on Aging**

PCOA is proud and honored to have received the first place Aging Innovation Award from USAging in July for its Take YOUR Shot Vaccine Campaign. Through this campaign, PCOA and its community partners have worked collaboratively to knock on over 100,000 doors and make over 90,000 phone calls encouraging people to take their vaccinations and get more accurate and reliable information about the vaccine via [covid19.pcoa.org](https://covid19.pcoa.org). PCOA just launched its 3<sup>rd</sup> flight of traditional advertising campaigns for the Take YOUR Shot campaign, focus on TV and radio in both English and Spanish – encouraging people to take their booster shots.

In July, PCOA also continued to implement its Friends & Neighbors program for home and community-based services. This is the first Friends and Neighbors program in the Country for home and community-based services and has led to faster service delivery for older adults waiting for services from the Area Agency on Aging. PCOA also continues to implementation of its Direct Care Worker campaign to recruit people into the Direct Care Workforce. PCOA's campaign is a TV, radio, and social media campaign driving people to [directcarejobsaz.org](https://directcarejobsaz.org). In partnership with the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, once a participant fills out the online application, a community health worker works with that person to get them screened, trained, and connected with companies hiring.

## **Region III NACOG Aging**

Region III has been making headway with staffing. We now have 7 openings left to fill and the applications have increased. The Cost of Living and the lack of housing continue to make it particularly difficult to recruit in Flagstaff and Prescott.

We are in the process of adding some Congregate sites to our Region. We are working with the Food Bank in Black Canyon City for a restaurant program and Mayer is submitting an RFP for their area. These areas have not had a meal site for several years.

Brandon Baxter, Programs' Manager presented at the USAging Conference on the use of technology to combat Social Isolation.

## **Region IV WACOG Area Agency on Aging**

### **Direct Care Worker Issues:**

Our Homecare Provider currently has adequate staffing to service current clients and take on new clients, in all areas of our service territory except: all of La Paz County and outlying areas of Mohave and Yuma Counties. Although they report that the new rate increases and incentives positively affected their workforce, the barriers to servicing the more rural and geographically distance areas remain a huge barrier. Turnover with the homecare staff in these areas lead to a Senior going on and off service and experiencing new care workers multiple times on a consistent basis.

### **Rental/Utility Assistance:**

WACOG AAA has partnered with our Community Action Department for decades to prioritize and connect Seniors to the safety net services administered through our “sister” department; utility and rental assistance, Weatherization and home modification assistance.

The State’s Department of Economic Security’s decision to move the administration of LIHEAP to the State, and through the ERAP Portal, is concerning given the inherent barrier and potential impact on older adults accessing utility assistance through an on-line Portal. Advocacy efforts by our organization focus on a transition of the local “safety net” delivery system to the statewide Portal which assures the equitable and accessible distribution and utilization of this resource to each County of the State. Further, the prioritization of vulnerable populations, like Seniors by County.

## **Region V Pinal Gila Council for Senior Citizens**

### **Jim Norris Central Kitchen – Meals on Wheels Central Arizona Program**

With building renovations completed in the month of June, PGCSA has moved forward with plans for service expansion. PGCSA had been in discussions with the City of Apache Junction regarding the possibility of providing nutritional services to their senior center, due to unforeseen financial challenges which caused service limitations. Subsequently, PGCSA entered into an agreement with the City to take over kitchen operations at the facility for congregate meal service and to take over management of the home delivered meal service effective July 1, 2022. The partnership will allow PGCSA to operate two kitchens and almost double current meal production. It will also allow our agency to expand service to approximately 40 additional seniors residing in the Apache Junction/Gold Canyon communities. PGCSA is very excited about this new venture and other opportunities that lay ahead for our nutrition program.

### **Electric Power Outage Response – Eloy, Arizona City & Surrounding Areas**

Central Pinal County experienced a major monsoon storm the evening of Sunday, July 17 causing widespread damage to Arizona Public Service’s electric transmission system and downed over 300 electric poles in rural parts of the county. As a result, residents of Eloy, Arizona City and Picacho experienced extended power outages. What was initially assumed to be a manageable 4-5 hour wait for restoration was prolonged up to 48 hours. As soon as PGCSA realized the situation was becoming dire, staff acted quickly to identify all actions necessary to ensure the safety of our clients, their caregivers and other seniors living in the affected areas, including conducting well checks on all 65 clients who had pre-registered as needing evacuation. All were encouraged to seek refuge with family, friends, church or at one of the two nearby community shelters. PGCSA staff provided transportation to five (5) clients and one (1) caregiver to local shelters. Two (2) additional clients suffering from chronic conditions were transported to hotels for a two (2) night stay, as shelter placement was not appropriate for their health situations. PGCSA also transported the pets of three (3) clients to county animal shelters for a temporary 48 hour stay. PGCSA staff, also worked directly with emergency personnel conducted well checks at a senior housing facility continuously offered water, ice and shelf stable food for those residents wishing to shelter in place. Once all electricity was restored to all communities, PGCSA shifted it’s focus on connecting seniors to food distribution events and offering transportation/delivery for those individuals who were unable to leave their home. In total, PGCSA delivered 30 food boxes and the central kitchen prepared an additional 500 meals for clients who had missed their regular meals on wheels deliveries or those that required additional nutritional support. This situation, while incredibly challenging, has encouraged us in so many ways. We are

## **Region VI: SEAGO/Area Agency on Aging**

### **USAging 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference Austin, Tx**

As a result of the extraordinary work and dedicated efforts by Karen Enriquez, with guidance and support from DES-DAAS in bringing Trualta to Region VI, SEAGO-AAA was chosen to present at the National Conference. Way to go, Karen and Carrie, Region VI is proud of you; we are fortunate to have innovative, passionate staff who want to make a difference in the rural parts of the state. In the past ten years, SEAGO-AAA has not had the opportunity to present at a national conference, and this will not be the first time; there will be many more to come.

### **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEADD)**

This year, in our efforts to bring awareness to our region, three different events took place during June.

- WEADD June 3, 2022, in **Safford**
- WEADD June 10, 2022, in **Sierra Vista**
- WEADD June 24, 2022 in **Nogales**

SEAEAT, Partners came together to host three successful elder abuse awareness events. All three events had speakers from adult protective services, the public fiduciary's office, and Long term Ombudsman program. We had many vendors giving support and information to the community and residents. In Safford and Sierra Vista, a balloon release helped create awareness.

Thanks to the help in organizing these events throughout the four-county region, the members of the Southeastern Arizona Elder Abuse Taskforce (SEAEAT) and AAA staff made this possible and raised awareness, and informed the communities of fraud scams, elder abuse, and much more.

## **Region VIII ITCA Intertribal Council**

ITCA held a virtual celebration for the “74<sup>th</sup>” Anniversary of the 1948 Native Right to Vote in Arizona “an important and historic event recognizing the efforts of American Indians who worked to protect the Native right to vote in Arizona.”

ITCA is partnering with Tribal Epidemiology Center to promote a Summer Wellness Package for 2,400 older adults. The package contains summer items and information on Shingles vaccination, hydration and stress management.

ITCA purchased items for (3) Tribal Long Term Care facilities: interactive companion pets, tactile sensory kits, books, brain health and other socialization and recreation activities.

Partnering with the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA) to conduct a survey that gathers information on health and social needs of elders. Information will be used for tribal planning, long-term care discussions, and the next Title VI grant application.

Tribal Reopening Project – ITCA-AAA created Reopening Guidance to assist with this transition and will provide technical assistance, as needed.

Alzheimer’s Disease Programs Initiative (ADPI) grant is nearing the completion of the Year 1 planning phase. Powerful Tools for Caregivers Training and Dementia Education will begin in July 2022 for three Tribal communities.