

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING  
LUZERNE & WYOMING COUNTIES  
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
Mental Health & Developmental Services Conference Room  
**April 20, 2023**

**MEETING ATTENDANCE**

**Present** – Joanne Corey, Dr. Noah Davis, Donna DePue, Angel Mathis, Phyllis Mundy, Milly Passeri, Henry Pennoni, William Runner, Nancy Thaler, Dominick Trombetta, Deborah Walsh, David Yonki, Joseph Yozviak

**Absent** – Laura Allport Dickson, Charlotte Kitler, Robert Nealon, James Sernak, Don Warren

**Staff Attendance**

**Jim Cease, Tim Farrell, Mary Roselle, Sheila Rothenbecker, Mary Schell**

**CALL TO ORDER** – Joe Yozviak, Chair

Joe Yozviak, Chair, called the AAA Advisory Board Meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2023 in the Mental Health & Developmental Services Agency Conference Room. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

**ROLL CALL** – Sheila Rothenbecker

Sheila Rothenbecker, Administrative Assistant to Executive Director Mary Roselle, conducted roll call of the AAA Advisory Board members.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Joe Yozviak asked for approval of the February 16, 2023 meeting minutes. There were no corrections requested. Henry Pennoni made a motion to approve and Angel Mathis seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the minutes were approved.

## **WELCOME MILDRED PASSERI – New Luzerne County Member**

Joe Yozviak introduced new AAA Advisory Board Luzerne County member Mildred (Milly) Passeri and welcomed her to the meeting. Milly shared some information about herself with the meeting members. Milly told the members she is a registered nurse and a graduate of Pittston Hospital School of Nursing. During her working years, Milly was a part of her families businesses. She later worked for the Area Agency on Aging for 14 years as the community health nurse before she retired. In that capacity, Milly performed assessments, home visits, along with visits to nursing facilities and personal care homes. She now looks forward to advocating for older adults as part of the AAA Advisory Board.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT - Mary Roselle**

### **Meeting Packet**

Mary called attention to the meeting packet which included information and pictures of Active Adult Centers events and activities. There was also a “Giving Back” article from Lifestyles Magazine featuring Rosie Letcher. Rosie is an exercise program instructor who organized the Cold Hand, Warm Hearts Winter Coat Drive and Seniors to Soldiers. She and members of her classes are part of the groups which benefit the community. Cold Hands, Warm Hearts Winter Coat Drive has been very successful and since 2021 has donated nearly one thousand coats to Catholic Relief Services and United Charities. Seniors to Soldiers volunteers write letters to deployed military men and women and have sent over 200 letters to date.

### **New Advisory Board Member**

Mary congratulated Milly Passeri on joining the Advisory Board. Mary said that although Milly had retired from the Aging Agency a few years ago, she has volunteered with the Alzheimer’s fundraiser and walk as well as volunteering at the Wyoming County Active Adult Center. Mary looks forward to working with Milly during her term on the board.

### **June Advisory Board Meeting**

There was a change in the Advisory Board meeting schedule which was discussed during the February meeting. The meeting that had been scheduled for June 15th will be held instead on June 8th. The information has been updated on the County website and members were again reminded by Mary.

## **Annual System of Care Expo**

The Annual Luzerne County System of Care Expo will be held this year in October. The expo is an integration of all Human Services agencies and services. The expo location has been changed from years past and will be taking place at the Mohegan Sun Casino in Wilkes Barre Township. Other changes include less break-out sessions, more main speakers and plated meals. The date may affect the October AAA Advisory Board Meeting, so Mary will keep everyone updated.

## **Salary Restructure**

Joe Yozviak, Noah Davis and Mary Roselle met with Acting County Manager Brian Swetz on Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> concerning the salary restructure. Phyllis Mundy had planned on attending, but was unable to make it. However, Joe read some comments during the meeting which had been sent by Phyllis. Mary felt the meeting went well and ACM Swetz made a commitment to move forward with the restructure plan. She hopes to give a report at the next meeting about the completion.

## **Public Health Emergency Declaration**

On May 1, 2023 the Public Health Emergency Declaration will end. Some Aging Agencies had already made changes in preparation for the declarations end. AAA had continued to offer frozen meals for pick-up on Mondays at the Active Adult Centers (AAC), emergency meal boxes to consumers and center members in addition to commodity boxes. Mary said our AAA will not be stopping the emergency food boxes, because the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money may continue to be spent through June 2024. The Active Adult Centers frozen meals distribution will make a change and stop the weekly pick-ups at the end of June. The decision was not made due to funding, it was a choice to provide socialization and activities, since most of the center members have returned to the sites.

## **Wyoming County Active Adult Center**

Mary has attended several meetings with the Wyoming County Commissioners and Wyoming County Director of Human Services John Alunni. The discussion has been about looking for new sites for the Active Adult Center. Some ideas were to purchase land and build, another was to consider renovation of an existing building. Mary will continue to keep the members informed.

## **PDA/P4A Quarterly Directors Meeting**

The PA Department of Aging (PDA) and the PA Association of Area Agencies on Aging (P4A) quarterly directors meeting was held virtually in March. Acting Department of Aging Secretary Jason Kavulich has contracted with Kevin Hancock to work on developing a 10 year plan. A

formal launch is expected in May with Governor Shapiro signing an executive order. Regional listening sessions are also planned. Mary expects to get more information at the June quarterly meeting.

### **Wyoming County Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference**

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Wyoming County held their first Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Conference. Luzerne County has held a GRG Conference for over twenty years. Wyoming County Human Services is trying to expand those services and would like to hold events to attract more consumers into the program. Wyoming County District Attorney Joe Peters along with Commissioner Thomas Henry spent the day at the event and are very involved and passionate about the GRG program. Many vendors were present to assist grandparents with the program. Mary Roselle sat on a panel with Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Supervisor Cynthia Sutton. A representative from Mental Health & Disability Services and a representative from Drug & Alcohol Services were on the panel too. The panel group answered questions from the grandparents about services and the program. The D&A representative offered details and showed paraphernalia of common trends with drug use. Items displayed had been confiscated from local elementary and high school students. A Narcan training was offered to those interested. The event had very positive feedback and will be held annually moving forward.

### **Senator Lisa Baker**

A regional meeting was held with Senator Lisa Baker. She was interested in updates on the Aging Agency services and shared her goals. The senator is always supportive and listens to the needs of those attending.

### **Misericordia University**

Mary recently made a presentation to the Speech & Pathology class at Misericordia University. The class of over 30 students was very interested in aging services. They asked Mary what to watch for when they are with their clients and how to guide them for referrals or to report abuse. Mary also spoke to the students about employment opportunities with the Area Agency on Aging. She will be presenting to Human Services students at the Penn State Hazleton campus on April 21<sup>st</sup>. Mary has visited that class many times over the years and two of those students have applied for a position with the agency.

### **Farmers Market Distribution Vouchers**

The Farmers Market Voucher program has increased the amount to fifty dollars and Mary knows the seniors will be pleased. The last few years the program was using U.S. mail service only for the applications and distribution of the vouchers. Before the pandemic, all distribution was held at several local sites. This year the program will be following a hybrid model and Mary decided

the in-person distribution will take place at four large sites. The proposed four sites are the Arena in Wilkes-Barre Township, Germania Hose Company in Duryea, Hazleton Penn State Campus and the Wyoming County Emergency Management Agency in Tunkhannock. Mary will be requesting help from the Hazleton Penn State students and the Wyoming County Commissioners have offered to help in Tunkhannock. The goal is to start the voucher distribution by the end of May or beginning of June. Older adults who are not able, or do not want to go to one of the sites for their vouchers, may use the mail-in process.

### **Advocacy Center**

During previous meetings, Mary has discussed the Advocacy Center and extension that was planned for the Telespond building in Lackawanna County. Mary updated the board members that ground will be broken sometime in mid to end of June. The extension will house beds used for older adults as a temporary shelter for up to forty-five days. During that time, services will be getting set up for the older adults' needs for living in the community. The Weil-Cornell Interview Decisional Ability Tool (IDA) will be used to assess the older adults to determine if they have the ability to make decisions on their own. Mary and the AAA Social Services staff have all received IDA training. When Mary receives more details on the ground breaking, she will share with the board members.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REPORT - Tim Farrell**

### **Mature Workers Program**

The Mature Workers Program Director Denise Stalica has been working on some ways to speed up the programs enrollment process. Before joining the program, those interested must first go through Career Link. Denise has made the Career Link videos and applications available for possible participants, so that step can be completed. She also made log-in available for the Disability and Determination letters which can be printed in the State Street office. Denise is now looking at the fingerprinting payment process in hoping to find another way to expedite the steps of enrollment. Along with those new ideas, Denise has been advertising with banners that she alternates monthly between the Active Adult Center sites. She will be checking for other high traffic areas to display the banners. Besides enrollment, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) is reporting the Mature Workers Program goals are being surpassed by service levels and service for those most in need. Service to those in need also surpassed for Title V enrollees.

### **Fiscal Unit**

The last budget revision for the year is being completed and will be uploaded to the state by Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. An additional 180,000 dollars in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds was awarded to AAA again. All Block Grant money from the state will be spent this year, however some of the ARPA funds may be returned.

## **Fiscal Budget Public Hearings**

Tim and Mary Roselle will be holding the AAA Fiscal Budget Public Hearings next week. The first hearing will take place at the Rose Tucker Active Adult Center in Nanticoke at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. The second hearing will take place at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> in the Wyoming County Active Adult Center in Tunkhannock.

## **Time Studies**

In preparation for the 2024 Fiscal Budget, a time study will be performed to get the allocation schedules completed. This is the first step in getting the budget ready and is needed prior to invoices arriving in July.

## **Vacant Positions:**

### **11 Vacant Full-time Positions:**

- Aging Care Manager 3 – Position will be filled as of April 21<sup>st</sup>
- Aging Care Manager 2 – 6 vacancies (4 are currently posted and 2 will be posted)
- Clerk Typist 2 – Posted
- Aging Case Aide 2 – Interview was held
- Accountant 1 – Candidate has been recommended
- Senior Center Manager 1 – Hazleton Active Adult Center

### **2 Part Time Position:**

- Senior Center Manager 1 – Lee Park Active Adult Center (will be filled internally)
- Clerk 2 – Preparing to post

### **3 Vacant Alternate Positions:**

- Food Service Worker – Wyoming County Active Adult Center (continuous posting)
- Senior Center Manager 1 – Lee Park Active Adult Center
- Senior Center Manager 1 – Plymouth Active Adult Center

## **SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT - Mary Schell**

### **Social Services Department**

A Care Manager 3 team member will be starting work in the Protective Services Unit on Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>. The unit will then be fully staffed. A Care Manager 2 was hired and began work on March 10<sup>th</sup> in the Assessment Unit. There were also two internal position moves with a Care Manager 2 moving from Intake to Assessment and a Care Manager 2 moving from Care

Management to Assessment. The Assessment and Protective Units are in good shape, however there are quite a few vacancies in the Care Management Unit. The Case Aides are assisting in the Care Management Unit by making the ongoing check-in calls to the consumers and completing the six month home visits. An intern was also helping the Care Management Unit.

### **New Team Member Training**

Mary is reviewing the training for new staff to be sure there is consistency. Many of the unit supervisors carry caseloads and their schedules are very busy. Mary met with each supervisor to go over their part of the trainings and what can be done for filling in when needed. Best practices have been identified and Mary is completing an updated training plan. The new staff will also be trained with the PA Department of Aging information. Additionally Temple University has a Protective Services Institute that provides basic Protective Services and Enrichment training for the AAA staff. A new online training from Temple University is being offered for supervisors too. Mary and Brian McAdarra are taking the course as well as AAA supervisors with under two years' experience. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, some members of the staff will be attending the Understanding Aging and Health Problems for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Chronic Mental Illness Conference for more enrichment opportunities.

### **Temple B'nai B'rith Presentation**

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Mary gave an aging presentation at Temple B'nai B'rith in Kingston. Mary was the second presenter in the Senior Series that Temple B'nai B'rith is hosting. The first presenter in the series was a gerontologist who spoke about issues that specifically affect seniors. Mary talked about the services offered through the Area Agency on Aging. Marg Strein from PA Medi went along with Mary and answered questions about Medicare and supplements. The next presentation in the series takes place on May 17<sup>th</sup> with the topic of Elder Justice Law.

### **Legislative Report**

House Bill #229 has recently been released and addresses health concerns associated with the lack of access to incontinence products for seniors and prohibitive costs. The bill will instruct the Department of Aging to establish a program in conjunction with local agencies that provide services to seniors. Free or low cost incontinence products would be provided to individuals 65 years or older, including adult diapers, protective undergarments, absorbent underwear, incontinence pads and related medications. The bill has been referred to the Aging and Older Services Committee. On the National level, the Senate Committee on Aging recently held a hearing regarding guardianship and alternatives. Mary explained that on both the state and national levels, there has been an increase in the examination of guardianship and the potential for exploitations of seniors. The members of the Senate Committee on Aging introduced a bipartisan Guardian Flexibility Act which amends the Elder Justice Act to make innovations grants possible. The grants would recruit law students to represent older adults who may be facing a guardianship hearing.

## **ACTIVE ADULT CENTER REPORT - Mary Roselle**

### **Health & Wellness Annual Plan**

The Health & Wellness Annual Plan for 2023-2024 has been submitted to the PA Department of Aging. The new evidence based program Bingocise has been added for each Active Adult Center site. Three Matter of Balance classes will be added as a result of AAA partnering with the YMCA. Classes will be held at the Dallas and Lee Park centers in May and a class will be held in June at the Pittston center.

### **Staff Training**

Some of the Active Adult Center staff has been trained in the Walk with Ease exercise program. This has been a very successful workshop when it was held in the centers in the past.

### **Geisinger Workshops**

AAA is currently in contact with Geisinger to partner with them, in order to provide Chronic Disease and Diabetes self-management workshops as well as the Matter of Balance workshops.

### **Matter of Balance Master Trainer**

Exercise Class Instructor Rosie Letcher is currently working on becoming certified as a Master Trainer in the Matter of Balance program. This will provide more opportunities for Rosie to instruct workshops for the center exercise program staff.

### **Heritage Home Senior Health Fair**

Senior Center Nutrition Director Bobbie Shendock and Hazleton Senior Center Director Marijo Penkala are representing the Aging Agency today at the Heritage Home Senior Health Fair taking place at the Laurel Mall in Hazleton.

### **National Nutrition Month**

March was National Nutrition Month and all Active Adult Center sites hosted special events. Some of the centers invited speakers, distributed hand outs and organized food drives. Each center collected items and selected a food bank or shelter for donation.

### **Emergency Food Boxes**

All senior center sites received their March and April delivery of Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) Emergency Meals. There were 738 meal boxes delivered representing 4,428 meals for consumers.

### **Active Adult Center Issues**

The Butler Township Active Adult Center water had been found to be contaminated in the Fall. The township is supplying water for the center and meals have been re-instated using disposable utensils and bottled water. The water system will be replaced by the Department of



Environmental Protection (DEP) and the center is undergoing that major repair. The Mountain Top Active Adult Center had water damage from flooding as did the apartments throughout the building. The repairs were focused on the apartment areas first and are now being done in the community room where center members meet. Meals are still being provided to the center members, but they cannot be eaten in the building. Tim Farrell has been in contact with the housing director and was told the work should be completed by the end of April.

### **Wilkes University Pharmacy Students**

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, all Active Adult Centers participated in the Wilkes University Pharmacy Students Medication Review Event and Blood Pressure Screenings. Partnering with Wilkes University and the medication review event, has always been a great success throughout the years.

### **Grant Money**

State Grant Money will be received by all of the Active Adult Centers. In the past, an application was required for specific purpose and the process was more competitive. Over the last few years, the grant money has been distributed to all of the centers. The money will be used for installing surveillance cameras in ten of the centers, upgrading signage on center buildings, training staff for the new Bingocise program and to pay for motion picture licenses (required to show DVD's and movies).

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Northeast PA Council on Aging**

Noah Davis gave an update on the Northeast PA Council on Aging (NEPACOA). Mary Roselle, Joe Yozviak and Noah represented the AAA Advisory Board along with the Counties of Luzerne and Wyoming when they attended the meeting. Fifteen meeting members attended either in person or by Teams. Noah was pleased with the number of members attending. Noah is the NEPA Council on Aging Chair and also attends the PA Council on Aging (PACOA) meetings in Harrisburg. At the last PACOA meeting, then PA Department of Aging Secretary Torres gave an update on programs. Since that time, there has been a change and Jason Kavulich was appointed the new PA Department of Aging Secretary. Noah looks forward to hearing Secretary Kavulich's report about the department at the next meeting. He also appreciates hearing updates from the members representing Carbon, Columbia, Pike, Schuylkill and Wayne counties. The group discusses topics concerning agency worker shortages, compensation restructuring, aging issues such as living expenses, rising rents, senior centers happenings and meal programs. The Northeast PA Council on Aging members will be meeting before the next Advisory Board meeting in June, so Noah will share more information then.

#### **End of Public Health Emergency Declaration**

Noah also spoke about the end of the Public Health Emergency Declaration. He informed the meeting members that older adults and those receiving Medicare benefits, will continue to have access to COVID vaccines without cost sharing when the Public Health Emergency Declaration

expires. Testing for COVID will be covered by Medicare without cost sharing if performed by an authorized provider and laboratory. Free over the counter testing, however, will end when the Public Health Emergency Declaration expires. No changes will occur with COVID treatments for anyone with Medicare if they should become ill. Older adults and others on Medicare will not be affected when the emergency declaration ends.

### **Rural Areas Transportation**

Millie Passeri had a concern about transportation for seniors in rural areas as there is no public transportation in Wyoming County. Mary Roselle said she has recently met with the Wyoming County Commissioners to address the issue. Suggestions and ideas were discussed. The transportation provider in that area was asked to work on a plan. Mary will update the Advisory Board when she has more information.

### **Presidents Executive Order Recognizing Caregivers**

Nancy Thaler mentioned that President Biden's Executive Order Recognizing Caregivers was signed this week. A press conference was held and the order brought attention and recognition to family caregivers from the childcare system level and all the way up to community based services. Nancy shared the documents with all meeting members.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Joe Yozviak asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Henry Pennoni made the motion and Joanne Corey seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next AAA Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2023 in the Mental Health & Developmental Services Agency Conference Room.



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**Dr. Noah Davis, AAA Advisory Board Secretary**

Respectfully Submitted by: Sheila Rothenbecker  
Administrative Assistant  
Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Area Agency on Aging