

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING
LUZERNE & WYOMING COUNTIES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
AAA State Street Conference Room
June 8, 2023**

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Present – Dr. Noah Davis, Donna DePue, Laura Allport Dickson, Charlotte Kitler, Angel Mathis, Phyllis Mundy, Robert Nealon, Mildred Passeri, Henry Pennoni, William Runner, Nancy Thaler, Dominick Trombetta, Don Warren, David Yonki, Joseph Yozviak

Absent – Joanne Corey, James Sernak, Deborah Walsh

Staff Attendance

Sandy Acornley, Tim Farrell, Mary Roselle, Sheila Rothenbecker, Mary Schell and County Manager Romilda Crocamo

CALL TO ORDER – Joe Yozviak, Chair

Joe Yozviak, Chair, called the AAA Advisory Board Meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 8, 2023 in the Area Agency on Aging State Street Conference Room. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

ROLL CALL – Sheila Rothenbecker

All members attending the meeting were asked to take a turn and introduce themselves to County Manager Romilda Crocamo during roll call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Joe Yozviak asked for approval of the April 20, 2023 meeting minutes. There were no corrections requested. Don Warren made a motion to approve and Henry Pennoni seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the minutes were approved.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

County Manager Crocamo

Mary welcomed County Manager Romilda Crocamo to the Advisory Board meeting. Mary told the meeting members that she and the entire AAA staff look forward to working again with Romilda. During Romilda's time as Acting County Manager, she was always available and very supportive of the Aging Agency team, services and programs.

Meeting Packet

Mary called attention to the meeting packet which included newspaper articles on the Telespond Senior Advocacy Center along with the Department of Aging's kick off of their Master Plan for older adults. There was also an application for the Farmers Market Vouchers and pictures of Charles T. Adams, Freeland and Kingston active adult centers recent activities.

PA Department of Aging Master Plan

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging is working on their first 10 year Master Plan for individuals with disabilities as well as older adults. On May 25th, the plan was launched at the University of Scranton by Secretary of Aging Jason Kavulich. Governor Shapiro signed an executive order for the plan earlier that day. The plan is aggressive and will be finished and published by the beginning of February 2024. Mary has attended some planning sessions and regional listening sessions will be held. Community members will then have a chance to voice concerns and offer input for the 10 year plan.

Telespond Advocacy Center

Mary will be attending an event at Telespond on Friday, June 9, during national Elder Abuse Awareness month. A groundbreaking ceremony for the new advocacy center facility will be held. The facility will house older adults in the temporary shelter for up to forty-five days. During that time, services will be arranged for the older adults needs when they go back into 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. Governor Shapiro and Secretary of Aging Kavulich will also be attending the event and Mary invited the board members to join them.

Farmers Market Voucher Distribution

The distribution of the Farmers Market Vouchers planned at a few local sites for the end of May and June, needed to be rescheduled. There was an unexpected delay with the state in sending the vouchers to the agencies. Cancellation of the distribution was advertised and AAA staff went to cancelled sites to be sure older adults were aware of the situation. Staff members assisted any seniors who came to the sites despite the cancellation, with completing an application for mailing of vouchers when they are available. When the state confirms delivery and vouchers are ready to be distributed, a press release will inform the public. A few of the larger Active Adult Centers

will hold days for in person distribution. Applications will still be accepted by drop off, e-mail and U.S. Postal Service to the AAA State Street office. Processed vouchers will then be sent to the consumers through U.S. mail.

Senior Community Grant

The agency was recently awarded a one hundred twenty-nine thousand dollar (\$129,000) Senior Community Grant. The funding will be used for the Arts Programs to be held in all of the Active Adult Centers. Mary believes the older adult center members will enjoy the program and would like Active Adult Center Director Sandy Acornley to give more detail during her report.

Wyoming County Active Adult Center

Mary has been speaking with the Wyoming County Commissioners and the plans for the center's new location are being finalized. As Mary had mentioned at the last Advisory Board meeting, she, Sandy Acornley and Center Director Racheal Kiwak visited the proposed site. The location offers a lot of beautiful outdoor space and area for the members to enjoy activities. Some renovations will be necessary on the inside of the building and an architect met with the Commissioners and Wyoming County Human Services Director John Alunni to discuss those. Mary will continue to update the board members.

Luzerne County Human Service System of Care Expo

The annual Luzerne County Human Services System of Care Expo will be taking place on Thursday, October 19th at the Mohegan Sun casino in Wilkes Barre Township. The format will be different this year and instead of break-out sessions, all the speakers will be located in the main room. PA Patrol Live seems to be very popular in the area and will be closing out the expo.

Public Health Emergency Declaration

Mary reminded everyone the Public Health Emergency Declaration ends on June 30th. As Mary mentioned in April, the frozen emergency meal option in the Active Adult Centers will stop. No one will be left without the food they need as they can have meals at the centers. The center managers are encouraging the socialization of attending and having meals together.

Emergency Food Boxes

AAA will continue providing emergency food boxes to agency home bound consumers as well as those individuals who attend the Active Adult Centers and want to receive them. Additional American Relief Plan Act (ARPA) funding will be used to provide the boxes through 2024.

Penn State Hazleton Campus

Mary recently made a presentation to students at the Penn State Hazleton Campus. She spoke to the students about services, programs and employment opportunities with the Area Agency on Aging. The students were very interested in learning about the agency and asked about internship opportunities.

Budget Presentation

Tim Farrell and Mary presented the AAA State Fiscal budget to the community at the Rose Tucker (Nanticoke) Active Adult Center and the Wyoming County Active Adult Center (Tunkhannock). The older adults attending asked questions, offered suggestions, and made comments about the budget. Mary and Tim appreciated the input received.

Active Adult Center Events

The Active Adult Centers have resumed their trips, which were on hold during the pandemic. The center members have been to Sight & Sound and the casino so far. A summer picnic has been planned and will be held for the center members at the Irem Temple in August. A band will be performing at the picnic and the older adults are very excited they will be getting a chance to sing along and dance the day away. They're all looking forward to more fun trips and upcoming events.

Social Services Events

The Social Services Unit will be holding a Fraud Bingo event in June and July. The June 29th bingo will take place at Luzerne County Community College. Game Host will be George Dillman from the PA Department of Banking & Securities. Discussion will include information on identifying and protection from common scams. The July 27th event will be held at the Shadowbrook Inn and Resort in Tunkhannock. Pennsylvania State Representative Tina Picket will co-sponsor the event along with the AAA. Speakers include District Attorney Joe Peters, representatives from PA Department of Banking & Securities, PA Attorney General's Office and the Tunkhannock Borough Police Department.

Agency Advertising

Television advertisements for AAA have been used for a few years and will now be taken to the next level. The commercials are set to include older adults who have received services from the agency. Many center members have volunteered to share their experiences and taping will begin soon. Care Management consumers will be offering their stories too.

Elder Abuse Awareness Month

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month and commercials will be shown on television to help make the public more aware of the issue. The Protective Services Unit will be displaying signs on the front of our Human Services buildings and Court House lawn. Events like the Fraud Bingos are planned and important for getting the message out to the community and older adults.

Salary Restructure

Mary thanked Joe Yozviak and Noah Davis for meeting with former County Manager Robertson regarding completion of the Management Team salary restructure. The restructure has been completed and the management group is very grateful. Mary appreciates the support of all the board members during the restructure process.

Quarterly Directors Meeting

Mary will be attending the PA Department of Aging (PDA) and Pennsylvania Association of Area Agencies on Aging (P4A) Quarterly meetings on June 12th and 13th in Harrisburg. The Aging 10 year Master Plan and dates for the listening sessions will be discussed. Mary will give an update about the meeting at the August Advisory Board meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES REPORT - Tim Farrell

Mature Workers Program

Denise Stalica (Mature Workers Program Director) will be attending the National Council On Aging (NCOA) Age in Action conference on June 12th and 13th in Arlington, Virginia. The conference offers a chance to discover innovative programs and network with colleagues to share information. Both days of the conference are filled with workshops and networking opportunities. This is the first in person conference the NCOA has held since the pandemic.

Participant Television Interview

Shannon Weston from Gray Television contacted Denise Stalica, because there is interest in interviewing a Mature Workers Program participant. There will be questions about the participant having to come out of retirement and join the program. A participant from the program whose training site is the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport, has been chosen and will be interviewed in June.

Time Study

The AAA Fiscal Unit is working on a four week time study that started on the 19th of May. Once the study sheets are completed and returned, Tim will compile all of the results and create the allocation schedules needed. This will allow Tim to work on the salaries budget for next year.

Fiscal Year Budget

The Fiscal Unit is in the process of gathering invoices needed and notifying providers of the August 4th deadline. Tim and the Fiscal Unit will be working on closing the books for the Fiscal Year and sending the report to the state by August 15th.

Vacant Positions:

12 Vacant Full-time Positions:

- Aging Care Manager 3 – Interview has been scheduled
- Aging Care Manager 2 – 6 vacancies (2 posted, 2 re-posted, 1 interview scheduled, 1 recommended)
- Clerk Typist 2 – Filled (new employee starts on June 9th)
- Aging Case Aide 2 – Re-posted
- Accountant 1 – Candidate has been recommended (going through clearance process)
- Senior Center Manager 1 - Hazleton Active Adult Center – Filled (new employee starts on June 16th)
- Senior Center Manager 2 - Pittston Active Adult Center

1 Vacant Part Time Position:

- Clerk 2 MIS Unit – Interviews being held

3 Vacant Alternate Positions:

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

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT - Mary Schell

Social Services Staff

Mary continues to be grateful for the Social Services staff as they fill in when needed until vacant positions are filled. During the Public Health Emergency Declaration some of the

Functional Eligibility Determinations (FED) were done for consumers through a phone call. Since the Emergency Declaration has ended, all FED's must be completed in person. On average there are between 200 to 300 FED's done during one month. This can be difficult while staying within the state's time frame guidelines. One of the Assessment Unit workers is out on leave, so some of the supervisors are filling in on the road in order to complete the FED's in a timely manner. In ongoing Care Management, the Case Aides assist with scheduled contact calls, which allows the Care Managers on the road to see people in their homes.

Protective Services

The Protective Services unit is only short one worker. There was a point in time when the unit was down to three workers for two counties. Mary believes the salary restructure has helped to attract and retain the Protective Services investigators.

Protective Services Training

Each AAA Care Manager is required to complete six hours of Protective Services training annually. Supervisors must complete the training also, along with an additional six hours. During the pandemic, those trainings were virtual. As of July 1st the Protective Services trainings will be back to in-person in Harrisburg. Regional trainings are being considered and Mary has offered our agency as a possible site for future Temple Institute Ongoing Enrichment trainings.

Scam Jam Events

AAA will be hosting two events for seniors in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Banking & Securities. The first event is Fraud Bingo and it will be held at the Luzerne County Community College on June 29th from 10 a.m. to noon with lunch following. George Dillman of PA Department of Banking & Securities will give a one hour presentation on common scams and how seniors can avoid them. Bingo games will then be played, which include prizes for the winners. The second event is Scam Jam and it will be held at the Shadow Brook Inn and Resort from 10 a.m. to noon on July 27th, lunch will follow. The Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office will give a presentation on check washing and identity theft. Bingo games will also be played with prizes given to winners. Both events are free to seniors and registration is required.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Advocacy Fund

Mary is the agency representative on the Advocacy Fund for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Committee. The grant is overseen by the Luzerne Foundation for grandparents or kin providers who are caring for a child and in need of assistance with legal funds. There is an application process and up to twenty-five hundred dollars can be given, to be used for legal fees.

Legislative Report

Bill #931 sponsored by PA Representative Eddie Day Pashinski makes the Advocacy Fund for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren available to all counties throughout Pennsylvania. It expands support state wide and will be called the Legal Services for Kinship Care Families Grant Program. The bill was unanimously passed through the Committee on Human Services and has advanced to the House for consideration.

House Bill #1134 amends the state lottery law to expand case coverage to December 31st of 2025. The bill is currently in the Aging and Older Adults Services Committee.

The Long Term Care Council, which is chaired by Secretary of Aging Jason Kavulich, represents the changing needs of older adults. House Bill #1300 introduced on May 30th would add a member of the Ombudsman Office to the council.

ACTIVE ADULT CENTER REPORT - Sandy Acornley

Health & Wellness Program

The exercise classes at all Active Adult Centers as well as the community sites, continue to be very successful. The seniors really enjoy the classes, the instructors and being back in person. Some Zoom exercise classes continue for those who need the convenience and may not be able to get to the center or sites. AAA will be partnering with Geisinger to offer Matter of Balance exercise classes at a few sites. Sandy has also been in touch with Geisinger and is working to provide Chronic Disease Self-Management and Diabetes Self-Management Workshops in the centers as well. Donna Fetsko who has been a long time exercise instructor for the Wyoming County Active Adult Center members, will be retiring at the end of the summer. Sandy is looking for a new instructor to take over those classes, so they can continue.

Active Adult Centers

Sandy reported that on May 2nd, the Mountain Top Active Adult Center re-opened. The center had to close in January this year, after severe water damage to the building affected the activity room. The members have all expressed how happy they are to be back together in the center again. There are a couple retirements coming up at the centers. Assistant Director Patty McClellan of the Hazleton center, retired on May 18th, Danielle Manganelli has been hired for that position and will be starting in the middle of June. Pittston AAC Director Connie Kostelac will retire at the end of June.

Frozen Meal Distribution

The frozen meal distribution will be discontinued. Meals will be served at the centers encouraging people to come back in person and benefit from the socialization. Sandy received two complaint letters and reached out to both people. They understood the decision better after it was explained.

Surveillance Cameras

Surveillance camera installations in the Active Adult Centers will be finished on June 9th. The cameras are considered a good investment that will be helpful if a situation occurs in the center and details need to be reviewed.

Summer Picnic

On Thursday, August 8th from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., a Summer Picnic will be held for the Active Adult center members at Irem Temple in Dallas. The Longo Brothers band will entertain. They have performed at dinner dances in the past and two of the members had been with the Poets formerly. Everyone is looking forward to the picnic lunch event and getting together. Transportation is being provided and Sandy anticipates a group of several hundred attending. She's hoping for good weather and lots of fun. Rain will not be a problem though, since the event will take place under the well covered Irem Pavilion.

Active Aging Day

Sandy spoke with Wilkes Barre City Event Manager Michael Slusser and confirmed the date of September 14th for Active Aging Day on Public Square. AAA will host the event which hasn't taken place since the pandemic. All of the Active Adult Center members are encouraged to attend and transportation will be provided.

Farmers Market Vouchers

The Farmers Market Vouchers were unexpectedly delayed this year and the distribution dates in May and June had to be cancelled. Applications are being accepted by drop off, e-mail or U.S. Postal Service and will be processed when the vouchers arrive. In person distribution will be scheduled at a few of the larger Active Adult Center sites, once the vouchers have been delivered to the agency from the state and prepared for distribution. At this point, there are over twenty-five hundred applications that have been received. More than nine thousand vouchers were distributed to consumers last year.

Retirement Plans

Sandy will be retiring from her position as Director of Senior Center Services in the beginning of September. She plans on moving closer to her grandchildren, so she can spend more time with them. Sandy said she loved the work she did while in the Active Adult Centers and then as Senior Center Services Director. She truly appreciated the opportunities and the support from Mary and her staff over the years.

NEW BUSINESS

Nancy Thaler asked if the agency as an organization would be offering comment for the Department of Aging 10 Year Master Plan for individuals with disabilities as well as older adults. Mary Roselle said there will be listening sessions scheduled for Luzerne and Wyoming Counties along with a possible joinder session with Lackawanna County to give comment. She will get more information from Secretary of Aging Kavulich at the June Quarterly Directors meeting and will be sharing the details with the board members.

ADJOURNMENT

Joe Yozviak asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bill Runner made the motion and Angel Mathis seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next AAA Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for August 17, 2023 in the Drug & Alcohol Services Agency Conference Room.



Dr. Noah Davis, AAA Advisory Board Secretary

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