

**Annual Report
Commission on Aging
2021**

2021 ANNUAL REPORT COMMISSION ON AGING (COA)

Purpose

The purpose of the COA is to advise and assist in the content, administration, and financing of county programs designed to serve the elderly residents of the county; to work with the community to develop awareness and understanding of problems and concerns of the elderly and to provide the Commissioners of St. Mary's County advice and assistance concerning county programs and resources offered for senior residents (50 years and older) of St. Mary's County.

Membership

Carolyn Guy, Chair; Janet Perryman, Vice Chair; Catherine Buckler, Secretary; Gail Murdock; Omonigho Olumese; Walter Boswell; Virginia Morris; Ann Marie Abell; Sandra Simmons; and Veda Willis.

Challenges and Updates

The Commission on Aging (COA) began the calendar year fresh, optimistic, and ready to work. Throughout 2021 the COA continued to meet in a hybrid fashion (both in-person at the old Garvey Center and via phone conference tools).

Garvey Replacement: The Garvey Senior Activity Center is complete and reopened in the spring when coronavirus related restrictions were lifted. The senior activity centers are holding virtual programs which are well attended.

COA Email Address: The COA has an easy to remember county issued email address—commissiononaging@stmarysmd.com. This e-mail address will be used on announcements, brochures, newsletters, etc. It will help to encourage contact from interested public about the programs, activities, concerns and issues for our senior population.

2021 COA Activities

Guest Speakers: Throughout 2021, the COA met on the fourth Monday of every month (with the exception of December). Each meeting is advertised and open for the general public to dial-in. During this past year numerous guest speakers

attended our meetings to provide insights into the many services offered to the seniors of our county. Highlights include:

- Ms. Alice Allen, Department of Aging & Human Services, former Senior Center Operations Manager, provided information about the Senior Activity Centers and the special programs offered by the centers.
- Ms. Angie Graves, Department of Aging & Human Services, Fiscal Supervisor, provided information about the Federal and State grants managed by the Department of Aging & Human Services.
- Ms. Sarah Miller, Community Programs and Outreach Manager, Department of Aging & Human Services, presented information regarding the Community Programs and Outreach Division which is responsible for communicating information to the senior community through the bi-monthly newsletter, website updates, Facebook, and local media. This Division is also responsible for the planning and implementation of the Department of Aging & Human Services signature events, including Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, the Community Health and Wellness Fair, Veterans Resource Day and Keys to Senior Independence.
- Ms. Debbie Barker, Senior Information & Assistance Manager, Department of Aging & Human Services, presented information regarding her division that offers information in the areas of housing, Social Security, benefits programs, transportation (Senior Rides), legal assistance, State Health Insurance Assistance Program, Senior Medicare Patrol and other community programs.
- Ms. Norine Rowe, RSVP Division Manager, Department of Aging & Human Services, presented. The division helps to place persons 55 years of age and older in volunteer opportunities with local non-profit agencies, groups, and community organizations.
- Ms. Cynthia Brown, Human Services Division Manager, Department of Aging & Human Services, presented. The division helps coordinate and support an array of programs and services for adults, families and children. The Human Services Division coordinates homelessness prevention efforts, Teen Court, Local Management Board, Christmas Caring, and is a partner agency with Project Graduation and WARM.

- Ms. Allison Swint and Elizabeth Walker, Department of Public Works & Transportation discussed the St. Mary's Transit System. Topics discussed included fares and tickets, schedules, route maps, Paratransit and Discount Fare Application, SSTAP (Statewide Specialized Transportation Assistance Program), connections with Calvert County and Charles County, and the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Paratransit Program for Persons with Disabilities.
- Dr. Rebecca Bridgett, the County Administrator provided information about how staff supports the Commission, shift of COVID restrictions, guidelines and recommendations, and upcoming training for COA members.

Hosts of the Annual Tri-County Meeting: The St. Mary's County COA hosted the annual Tri-County COA Meeting. Because of the on-going pandemic, the meeting was a hybrid meeting with some attending virtually and some in-person. The meeting was held on June 30, 2021 at the Garvey Senior Activity Center. The meeting was also offered virtually for Calvert and Charles County COA members. Guest speakers provided timely information on topics ranging from Reopening After COVID; Alzheimer's and Other Dementias; Safety for the Elderly; How to Protect Yourself from Scams; and Seniors Substance Use issues. As a wrap-up, the Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's COA Chairs each provided an update on current activities.

As a result of the meeting, the chairs of Calvert County, Charles County, and St. Mary's County COAs meet on a quarterly basis to share information on important topics common to the three counties. These topics include affordable housing, transportation challenges, and ways to help seniors age in place.

The Calvert County COA will host the next Tri-County meeting in June 2022.

COA Survey: The COA continues its outreach to keep the community informed of new and ongoing issues concerning seniors. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, members had limited interaction with the public during 2021. In order to reach the citizens we serve and help us plan on how to meet the needs of our senior residents, the COA conducted a survey to gather information on the needs of our senior population.

The members developed the survey and advertised it from mid-October through December 1, 2022. We used Survey Monkey and shared the link with the public.

The link to the survey was placed on both the Commission on Aging website and the County Government website. Additionally, the survey was available on the Facebook site for the Enterprise, Southern Maryland News, the Department of Aging & Human Services, The Baynet, Southern Maryland Breaking News, Southern Maryland News Net, and SOMD.com. Hard copies of survey were made available at each senior activity center. The survey was also advertised in the senior activity center e-newsletter and in the New Beginning Newsletter.

We received many responses – 295 overall. Results from the survey will help us shape our 2022 agenda.

Homeless Prevention Board: The COA has a representative attending the Homelessness Prevention Board which meets every month virtually. This regular engagement provides insight into the challenges and solution sets in providing services to community members in need of housing, food, jobs, and health and how it intersects with COA mission.

Plans for 2022

In January 2022, 5 new members joined the 7 members who remained on the COA. With the additional expertise these members provide, the COA will now establish 6 subcommittees: Senior Housing, Senior Transportation, Senior Legislation, Veteran Issues, Technology, and Outreach.

The goal of each subcommittee is to review our survey data with a focus on their individual areas, identify issues and/or concerns, and develop recommended courses of action to answer any senior community concerns.

Ongoing Activities

The members of the COA, proudly and willingly, help individually in other community areas. Some are: Garvey Council, RSVP Advisory Committee, Southern Maryland American Legion, Delicados, local food banks, WARM program, Soup Kitchens, Triad/SALT, all three senior activity centers (Garvey, Loffler, and Northern), AARP tax preparation, St. Mary's County Woman's Club, Inc., National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Homeless Coalition and the YMCA Committee.

We meet the fourth Monday of the month at 1:00 p.m. We welcome any opportunity to share with you, in more detail, our efforts and invite you and/or others to attend our meetings.

Acknowledgement

The Commission on Aging wishes to thank Ms. Lori Jennings-Harris and her staff at the DAHS for providing a wealth of information and support. Thanks also go to Ms. Mercedes Jones, Senior Administrative Coordinator, for her superb support and assistance. In addition, the COA would like to recognize Ms. Catherine Buckler, our secretary, for her tireless efforts in helping us gather the responses from our COA Survey.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Guy
Chair, St. Mary's County Commission on Aging

Date: 1 February 2022