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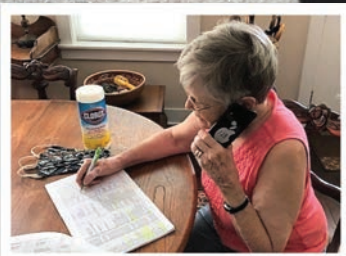
Aging in Place:
COVID-19 EDITION



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Telephone
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JULY - SEPTEMBER 2020



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Our Mission

Our mission is to enhance the lives of older adults through services and compassionate care designed to improve the health, independence and economic security of all Nassau County seniors and their families.

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Fernandina Beach Life Center

1901 Island Walk Way, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
Phone: 904-261-0701 – FAX: 904-261-0704
Facebook: Nassau County Council on Aging
Website: www.nassaucountycoa.org

Fernandina Beach Life Center Staff Contacts:

Adult Day HealthCare – Debra Dombkowski, LPN, CDP
Advocate Home Healthcare – Debra Jean Landolfi
Case Management – Fran Hidden
Circle of Friends – Frances Bartelt
CHORE Program – Frances Bartelt
Development – Wallace Bennett
Electric Assistance/Water Assistance – Wendy Hughes
Fall Prevention – Laura O'Reilly
Finance – Karen Medina (Interim)
Human Resources and Compliance – Don Harley
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Marketing and Communications – Liz Dunn
Nutrition and Meal Programs – Gina Cox
Programs and Services – Robin Bogosh
Transportation – Michael Hays
Volunteer Opportunities – Lynne Starling

Hilliard Life Center

37002 Ingham Road, Hilliard, FL 32046-1011
Phone: 904-845-3331 – FAX: 904-845-4491
Facebook: Nassau County Council on Aging
Website: www.nassaucountycoa.org

Hilliard Life Center Staff Contacts:

Administration/Case Management – Linda Rogers
Case Management – Sue VanZant
Nutrition/Meal Programs and Activities – Frances Nobles

NassauTRANSIT

Phone: 904-261-0700 – Toll Free: 800-298-9122
FAX: 904-261-3940
Facebook: NassauTRANSIT Website: www.nassautransit.org
Contacts: Michael Hays and Scott Nile

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A Message from our President & CEO



Dear Friends,

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I found myself at a local store looking at empty grocery shelves. I heard a gentleman say, "I'm 85 years old and I'm tired of fighting for food every day." I approached him, introduced myself and learned he had ventured out during the stay-at-home order. He lived alone and needed food. NCCOA had just launched our "boots on the ground" effort, and I shared that we would be happy to deliver a week's worth of meals (or more if he needed them) to his door step – free of charge. Needless to say, he couldn't believe his ears...there was an organization ready and willing to help him! And your *Nassau County Council on Aging* and our *Meals on Wheels (MOW)* program did just that. Even though I did not come away with many of my grocery items, I left the store with a smile on my face.

Whether younger or older, with means or without, alone or with others, everyone has witnessed change during this challenging time. As our mission is to help seniors "live happy and healthy lives," we have retooled the way we do business in this time of COVID-19 to ensure we remain mission-minded – even when the world is in a state of uncertainty. With a cohesive and motivated team, we quickly and without hesitation adapted to the change. A core group of staff members has remained at both Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Life Centers to work on the frontlines, organizing meal delivery for our seniors and sending *MOW* delivery drivers on their way throughout the county. NassauTRANSIT bus operators have delivered meals from our partner restaurants to our Life Centers, in buses and soon in our new *MOW* trucks. Volunteers are a united army of helpers, seemingly each day with a different task – always completed with a happy heart. From unloading food delivery trucks to stocking freezers, from assembling donated boxes to packing weekly meals...even sewing and delivering countless masks – volunteers have not hesitated to donate their time to make sure seniors in Nassau County are food secure.

NCCOA has been on the receiving end – once again – of an extremely generous community. Donations to support free meal delivery to any senior have been plentiful. Perennial donor partners have again come to our aid, and new partners have appeared on the scene at a very critical time for the most vulnerable population. Local government, corporations, organizations, groups and many individuals have provided financial support like never before. With everyone's help, we are doing the right thing. We are truly grateful.

There have been many challenges to seniors during this time. In addition to nutritional trials, isolation has become even more prevalent. It is true that isolation can lead to loneliness which can lead to depression. Depression can lead to illness. Our Telephone Reassurance Program has ramped up and has been in full swing since the state stay-at-home order. We have touched hundreds and hundreds of seniors, providing a lifeline of care, compassion and conversation.

As NCCOA's leader, my professional expectations have been far exceeded by the selfless support from staff, volunteers and donors. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Personally, this challenging time has been a valuable reminder that we need to live in the moment since nothing is guaranteed. Keep the people you love close and take each day one at a time. Focus on caring for each other and remember to care for yourself.

We're all in this together,

Janice Ancrum
President & CEO

Our Funding Partners



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About Nassau County Council on Aging



Please visit www.nassaucountycoa.com and [Facebook.com/nassaucountycoa/](https://www.facebook.com/nassaucountycoa/) for information and updates on NCCOA's facilities, programs and services.

LIFE CENTERS

Both Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Life Centers offer those 60 and older assistance, information and support, in addition to many fun and engaging activities...plus opportunities to socialize, the key to a happy, healthy life. Meeting space is available for rent (maximum occupancy 320 persons) at 1901 Island Walk Way for group functions.

Contacts: **The Life Center – Fernandina Beach, 904-261-0701**
 The Life Center – Hilliard, 904-845-3331

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

NCCOA's Programs & Services Department serves seniors by providing vitally important resources such as Case Management, Nutrition, Fall Prevention and Adult Day HealthCare (ADHC). NCCOA also partners with local and state-funded programs to assist with home energy crises (EHEAP) and facilitate City of Fernandina Beach Wastewater, Refuse and/or Storm Water Fee Exemption applications and Town of Hilliard Water Bill Assistance for qualified residents.

Contact: **NCCOA, 904-261-0701**

ADULT DAY HEALTHCARE – “THE CLUB”

The only one of its kind in Northeast Florida, NCCOA's Adult Day HealthCare Program – also known as “The Club” – provides respite for caregivers and offers their loved ones a safe and secure environment. The program, licensed by the State of Florida, specializes in Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias, and offers families an affordable alternative to the rising costs of long-term care. The Club is supervised by a licensed nurse and Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP).

Contact: **Debra Dombkowski, LPN, CDP, 904-775-5480 or ddombkowski@nassaucountycoa.org**

ADVOCATE HOME HEALTHCARE

Advocate Home Healthcare, a division of Nassau County Council on Aging, provides members with non-medical, in-home services related to daily living activities such as personal care, respite, homemaking and companion services. Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) and Home Health Aides may also accompany members to appointments and activities. Members receive a minimum of two hours of care to full 24-hour shifts, depending on the need. Fees for these services are paid via private pay or approved Medicaid Long-Term Care (MLTC), pre-qualified state and federal programs, and Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Contact: **Advocate Home Healthcare, 904-775-5499 or advocatehomehealthcare@nassaucountycoa.org**

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – NASSAUTRANSIT

The public transportation system in Nassau County, NassauTRANSIT provides both scheduled public bus and registered paratransit services. Our public bus service has convenient stops across the county between Hilliard and Fernandina Beach, at River City Marketplace and in downtown Jacksonville. The *Island Hopper* bus provides local public transit service around Fernandina Beach from Thursday through Monday. The fare for scheduled public bus service is only \$1 with no charge for transfers. Registered paratransit is available to all qualifying county residents and the fare is only \$2. All NassauTRANSIT bus operators and vehicles are credentialed to FTA and FDOT requirements, and all vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

Contact: **NassauTRANSIT, 904-261-0700/800-298-9122 or www.nassautransit.org**



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Nassau County: Age-Friendly Community

BY JUSTIN TAYLOR,
Nassau County Commissioner, District 5

One of our mantras in Nassau County is that we want to be a place where people can live, work and play. Over the last few years, the Nassau County Commission has introduced initiatives to focus on improving the quality of life for our residents. When serving over 85,000 citizens, meeting the needs of our diverse population can be challenging, yet exciting at the same time.

We are fortunate here in Nassau County to have a varied geographical setting ranging from our pristine beaches to our plentiful timber. Our environment and friendly nature of our citizens is why people love to call Nassau County home. The questions then become, how do we maintain that feeling – how do we support that sense of place – and how do we improve the ever-changing quality of life?

With Nassau County being ranked as the 26th fastest growing county in the United States, future planning has become an important role for the County Commission. One topic that comes to the forefront of everyone's mind is housing affordability. While this has become a widely recognized issue in the state, in 2017, Nassau County jumped at the opportunity to address this shortfall by reestablishing the Essential Housing Advisory Committee (EHAC) to review and make policy recommendations to the County Commission. Affordable living has become a hot topic for many communities and encompasses the need not only for housing, but transportation as well. The term "aging in place" comes to mind as most adults would prefer to stay in their own home as they age, but with that comes a need for local municipalities to embrace the affordability component. As housing costs rise the affordable housing stock dwindles – thus causing issues for not only our younger workforce, but our senior population as well. One key element has been the permitted use of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in order to allow more affordable housing options. Sometimes referred to as "mother-in-law suites," these types of units provide opportunities for families to stay together in proximity while maintaining the character of a single-family home. In addition, ADUs are perfect for working adults who are unable to pay the cost



of high-rent locations. As the EHAC continues, there are anticipated policy recommendations that will continue to encourage builders to provide a more diverse housing stock for our workforce and senior population.

Nassau County is quickly becoming an age-friendly community. In fact, just last October we joined the

AARP's Age Friendly Community Network. This designation shows our attempt to assess, plan, and implement policies and programs to make our community livable and accessible for people of all ages. This year alone we have provided nearly half a million dollars in funding toward Nassau County Council on Aging's (NCCOA's) many programs, including the *Meals on Wheels* program that was enhanced for our senior population during the COVID-19 pandemic. With support from the Health Department, NCCOA and many other community partners, Nassau County residents can rest assured that additional initiatives and programs will come forward to facilitate the needs of our citizens.

I often forget, like many of us, to take a step back and look at our surroundings. When I do, I'm reminded about all the good things we have here in Nassau County. Over the last few months, we have faced many trials in our way of life. A virus attacked our health, our economy and our freedom. What I have found, however, is that we live in a community that truly cares. Our public safety and health-care professionals have worked around the clock to serve and protect our citizens, our non-profits have increased their resources to provide more services, and the people of this county have stepped up to support our community. You are all what has helped us through this difficult time and it's because of you that Nassau County will become stronger.

Justin M. Taylor,
Nassau County Commissioner,
District 5



Thank You

I just have to thank you guys. This is a blessing—especially in times like this. The gentleman who brought the meals out last week just brought a smile to my face. It really makes my father happy. It is especially nice for people who don't have much.



Aging in Place: COVID-19 Edition

The “New Normal” Creates Challenges and Opportunities

Life as we knew it changed in mid-March. However, the NCCOA Team – as well as Nassau County as a whole – banded together to take care of one of our most vulnerable populations... seniors. For 46 years, taking care of seniors is – and will always be – our top priority. And while some of our program and service offerings have been on hold during the pandemic, feeding seniors has remained a constant.

MOW Delivery

“We launched our ‘boots on the ground’ initiative immediately to provide nutritious food to our seniors in need,” said Janice Ancrum, NCCOA President & CEO. “Some seniors did not have the means to buy food or found it too challenging to find food in grocery stores, others were afraid of leaving their home. At the peak, we were delivering weekly meals to 685 local seniors – a 485% increase.”

Not anticipated for the 2020 budget and the reality of reduced funding when programs and services are not provided, this substantial increase in meals needed may have been a mountain too steep to climb. However, the county rallied and generously ensured no senior would go hungry. County and city government, corporations, organizations, and countless individuals and groups provided critical support for our seniors.

Our suppliers continued to support our efforts in a big way. GA Foods delivered thousands of frozen and shelf-stable meals in late March and April. Independent Living Systems



NCCOA President & CEO Janice Ancrum and HR & Compliance Director Don Harley present one of two new MOW delivery trucks.

(ILS) delivered 6,000 more frozen meals in early April. Realizing that statewide food suppliers may be stretched, Janice Ancrum partnered with local restaurants to furnish meals.

In May, Nassau County's safety net for seniors became even stronger with two brand-new *Meals on Wheels* delivery trucks, enabling NCCOA to cover even more ground to feed Nassau County residents. Each 2020 F-250 truck is equipped to deliver up to 200 hot meals at a time with a built-in warmer, and more than 125 frozen meals, milk and juice in the refrigerated compartment. The first MOW truck-delivered meals will be transported this summer.

Restaurant Partners

For NCCOA, the challenges of COVID-19 have had a silver lining. We have fostered new partnerships with four local restaurants to en-

sure our seniors have nutritious and delicious food. Initially funded by County Manager Mike Mullin and the Nassau County Board of Commissioners, Ciao Italian Eatery, Garden Street Bistro, Pogo's Kitchen and Stephanie's Sugar and Spice Café prepared 2,300 meals each week for a two-month commitment to stave off the potential shortfall from statewide vendors. To ease delivery, WestRock generously donated 21,000 boxes toward the effort. Restaurants created monthly menus, paying close attention to nutritional requirements and portion control. Many of the menu items can be traced back to customers' favorites. NassauTRANSIT picks up and delivers the sealed and labeled meals to NCCOA's Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Life Centers. Commercial freezers hold them until *Meals on Wheels* drivers deliver the meals to seniors in need.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Thank You



I hope and pray that everyone in every county and in our nation has a similar service [Meals on Wheels]. It is hard not having family and friends here, but it is great having a friend in you [NCCOA]. I feel that I can survive this over the next few months now that my life isn't going to be just living off of peanut butter and jelly.



MOW for Pets volunteers review the schedule for canine and feline deliveries, left. Volunteer **MOW** drivers check in with NCCOA Nutrition Manager Gina Cox before making deliveries, right.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

"A substantial part of the POGO's Kitchen philosophy is to benefit the greater good and take care of our community," said Edward Howell, Chief Operating Officer, POGO's Kitchen. "This opportunity fit perfectly with our mission, and also helped keep our staff cooking during a challenging time."

Volunteer Support

The sheer quantity of meals required a hardworking team of volunteers to offload deliveries from semis (including a huge donation from FarmShare), stack boxed meals in four commercial freezers and deliver food each week to local seniors throughout the county. Weekly, NCCOA volunteers transferred meals between freezers to stay ahead of the demand and ensure seniors received a variety of nutritionally balanced food. Volunteers were also called upon to grocery shop and pick up prescriptions for seniors in need.

While many volunteers were "NCCOA veterans," others were brand-new: adults working from home or furloughed from jobs; newly

homeschooled teenagers and their parents; Nassau County Public Works crew members; and individuals just wanting to help. Some volunteers related how humbling it was to help people who had never been on the receiving end for support; they may have gained more by helping than the people they helped!

"Seniors who were getting by on their own suddenly depended on us for the most basic needs," one volunteer shared. "When it comes to food, waiting lists are unacceptable. Older adults need everyday, baseline nutrition and they usually need it TODAY. I'm happy to be a part of the NCCOA volunteer team."

Telephone Reassurance

The simple act of checking in by phone has meant the difference between connection and isolation for many seniors in Nassau County. As with many at-risk groups, isolation can especially affect the mental and physical health of older adults. Telephone reassurance seeks to improve quality of life and reduce concerns facing homebound seniors such as depression, anxiety and loneliness. In

April alone, a specially trained team of four volunteers spoke with close to 700 seniors for a total call time of approximately 165 hours. Nearly 100 seniors have requested ongoing telephone reassurance.

One gentleman shared, "This is fantastic! I feel like an orphan who has been taken in. Before this time, I never felt so alone. My children live out of town and I don't get to see them often. Now I feel a whole lot better—I'm not as discouraged, depressed or downtrodden. I look forward to these weekly calls. Every time I hear from you my spirit is lifted."

Supported by ElderSource and the Department of Elder Affairs, NCCOA's Telephone Reassurance program is not new. However, it swung into high gear during Gov. Ron DeSantis' stay-at-home order. Upon request, seniors are contacted by phone at agreed-upon times; most request a weekly call. A friendly voice is sometimes just what seniors need to lift their spirits. Callers initiate conversation, first confirming seniors are ok, and second inquiring about any

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



Thank You

I want to thank you so very much. It has been five weeks now and I am relieved of the difficult chore of grocery shopping. The volunteers are so wonderful and the meals are also. One time they even brought me apples and, of all things, toilet paper!



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

needs they may have. We also have established procedures and emergency contacts in case we are not able to reach a senior by phone after several attempts.

COVID-19 or not, if you would like us to check in with you and/or if you know someone who would benefit from the program, contact Melody Dawkins, Membership & Community Engagement Director, mdawkins@nassau-countycoa.org or 904-775-5477.

Note: Throughout this time, Home Health services have continued and NassauTRANSIT has offered same-day paratransit service for registered riders. We are in the process of planning for the reopening of the Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Life Centers, as well as Adult Day HealthCare for those with dementia.



Stephanie's Sugar & Spice Café co-owners Michael Walden and Stephanie Christopher display meals ready to be delivered to Nassau County seniors.

My Coronavirus Experiences on the Frontline

BY LYNNE STARLING, Volunteer Director

On or about March 15, life as we knew it made a significant shift for all of us. Our home lives, work lives and relationships would all require a new focus. My regular "job" of recruiting and assigning volunteers to various activities in our Life Centers came to a screeching halt while I switched gears and began completing Crisis Response Intake Forms for more than 700 seniors in Nassau County.

My very first phone call was from a gentleman who shared that he would be unable to keep the meals frozen. He couldn't heat them because he lived in a storage shed with no electricity behind the home of a family member. He had no running water and showered each day in the family member's home. I remember hanging up from the call in tears, thinking, "Maybe I'm not the right person for this assignment." However, with the help of my team members, we were able to deliver a hot meal each day, offer some shelf-stable food items he could store and shop for him.

There were other calls that pulled at my heartstrings and provoked tears, but more often, a smile. I learned that this unprecedented event had leveled the playing field for all of us. Not only were seniors with limited financial resources requesting meals, but there were many who had the means but due to their age and preexisting health conditions were simply afraid to leave their homes. It was not unusual to hear people say, "I've never asked for anything before, but..." or express their discomfort at

accepting what they believed was a handout. Many times, these same individuals felt compelled to make a donation to NCCOA to show their appreciation. This experience has been humbling for many of us, to say the least.

Recently, I spoke with a lady who lives alone (ironically, in my own subdivision). Her adult children were there early on but had returned to their own families in other cities. We talked at length and decided that she would benefit from transportation assistance provided by NassauTRANSIT for upcoming doctor visits and that our own Advocate Home Healthcare arranged for basic cleaning she was unable to do due to a shoulder injury. She had no idea that we offered so many services and started crying happy tears when she realized help was on the way. She thanked me over and over. We decided we would meet for coffee when this is all behind us.

There have been many other calls that touched me deeply. For the most part, people are so appreciative and amazed at what we have been able to do for local seniors. I have been truly blessed, and I know this because almost every single person I speak to says, "God bless you and all the wonderful people you work with and thank you for everything you do!"

While our "new normal" seems so vastly different these days and probably will for quite some time, I know life is good and I am honored to have been part of our "boots on the ground" initiative and a member of this amazing team at NCCOA.



Lynne Starling,
NCCOA Volunteer Director

Sharing Your Pandemic Perspectives

BY MELODY DAWKINS,
NCCOA Membership &
Community Engagement Director

As we transition out of isolation, our “new normal” will be much different. There will be dramatic changes to our daily life such as temperature checks, everyday use of face masks and social distancing. We will also most likely see more frequent and thorough hand washing, as well as an increase in sanitization and deep cleaning in public places. Our world will change more for some than others depending on age, risk factor and location.

We asked some folks who have a relationship with NCCOA – volunteer, donor, staffer – “How has your life changed since COVID-19?” Here’s what they had to say...



Bruce B. – ‘Honey-do’ list getting done from the top... but the bottom keeps getting longer. I miss the fellowship at NCCOA singing tunes...so I’m practicing a few new ones.



Chris V. – I am using this time to strengthen my faith and reconnect with friends and loved ones. I’m also learning how to plant a vegetable garden to grow food so I can eventually share some with my neighbors. My onions are doing the best so far.



Cynthia H. – This time away from church and friends and family and my daily routines has been difficult, but the peace and quiet of the past few weeks has made me appreciate the simpler things in life...a walk with my husband during sunset...FaceTime chats with my adult children...paying attention to the forest trees and noticing their beauty...listening to the volume of birds that is usually drowned out by the noise of human business and traffic. I’ve learned that solitude can sometimes help us see the true meaning of life. I have an even greater appreciation for those who have served us all during this time of isolation, our first responders and medical staff, and also the people who serve us at the grocery stores and gas stations. And it may sound silly, but I sincerely miss the library. It’s been a sobering reflection of what’s really important and what’s frivolous and nonsense.



How has your life
changed since the
outbreak of the
coronavirus?

We want to hear
from you.

Nola H. – Families are gathering back together, and children are learning to play outside and not on a computer or a cell phone. Parents are learning who their children really are and children are finally getting to know who their parents really are. They are actually spending time together...What a blessing!!!



Judie M. – With two grown daughters, one the mother of two and the other getting married later this year, [I know that] they will always be my little girls. In reality, they are both healthcare providers, nurses who are skillfully trained and compassionate, healing and comforting others in this time of uncertainty. I also started sewing face masks for the community. Through the words of a simple thank you note from my daughters, I saw my own mother in my reflection.



Roslyn H. – Despite some big disappointments (i.e., not being able to be with my daughter for the birth of her firstborn child) and financial fears (my 401k did what?), the COVID-19 experience has not been without some unforeseen positive changes. It was only when I had absolutely nothing on the calendar and nowhere to go that I experienced what it actually feels like to relax into the moment and “be present.” I’ve rediscovered the pleasure of savoring a book instead of listening in the car while



Thank You



You are a blessing in a bad time. The food is delicious and nutritious—much better than expected. Portions are nourishing—causing me to eat better than I usually do. The deliverer was very nice; he was kind. God bless you all! This is a wonderful service you are doing.

driving to Publix. One of the nicest surprises was that I now know for sure that my husband and I will be able to live together in harmony as we spend more time at home with each other. My fear of being together in old age has gone away. What a gift!



Mary S. – I have missed seeing friends but understand their feelings of wanting to be safe whether it is for health reasons or family nearby they have not seen in weeks. I have tried to shelter myself as much as possible so that I will be able to hug my elderly parents who have been secure in their assisted living. The one thing that has changed for me is my faith. We have had some really rough times in the past two months, and we have come through even stronger.



Carroll, *Forever Friends* – I was reminded how caring and committed to community most Americans are. I appreciate how people I know pull together to help each other. I truly appreciate my younger neighbors who have made me their family in so many ways.



Betty, *Forever Friends* – I have learned how dear friends are. I've learned to appreciate living the best you can with what you have. After this is over, I will try to stay in touch with friends and family more often.



Kathy, *Forever Friends* – The Coronavirus experience has really made me appreciate everything I have in my life...my husband, my family, my friends and my home. Life is short, stay in touch. When you are thinking of how a friend or family member is doing, stop thinking about it and call or visit with them if you can. What I'll do differently in the future is to slow down, enjoy

what I have and travel to see more of this beautiful county.



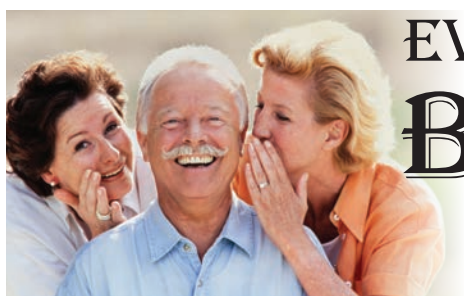
Lorraine, *Forever Friends* – I have learned my life was too hectic. I have enjoyed being at home and having just one or two things to accomplish each day. I need to make the effort to reach out to family and friends. I have come to appreciate my husband, family, friends and community; my health and ability to stay fit and eat well; my faith and all of my many blessings. I will continue to look and celebrate the joy in life. I will try to keep my life simple and happy. I will try to continue to help others.



Margo M. - In times like these, you learn to become more appreciative and considerate of others. I never knew how much I missed being around other people until we were advised to stay home. It's hard to not be able to give a simple handshake or hug to friends you haven't seen in a while. This pandemic is more of a rude awakening for me and a reminder of how life is precious and within each day we can find beauty if we just take the time to stop and look.



Cindy B. – I've learned a new app, Zoom, and used it for my Wednesday night Bible study, beginners' yoga class, a virtual happy hour with friends and a 90th birthday party for my mother. I learned another new app, Noom, and lost 7 pounds by following the recipes, advice and exercise suggestions. I watched my 9-year-old daughter be baptized on YouTube on Easter Sunday morning. I finally had time to explore East Nassau County by delivering *Meals on Wheels* as a volunteer for NCCOA.



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Thank You

The publisher and staff of the *News-Leader* joins the Nassau County Council on Aging in thanking the many volunteers who tirelessly and selflessly support seniors in our area.

Fred Rogers (of Mister Rogers' fame) once shared this very timely message – "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" In our neighborhood, you don't have to look far ...



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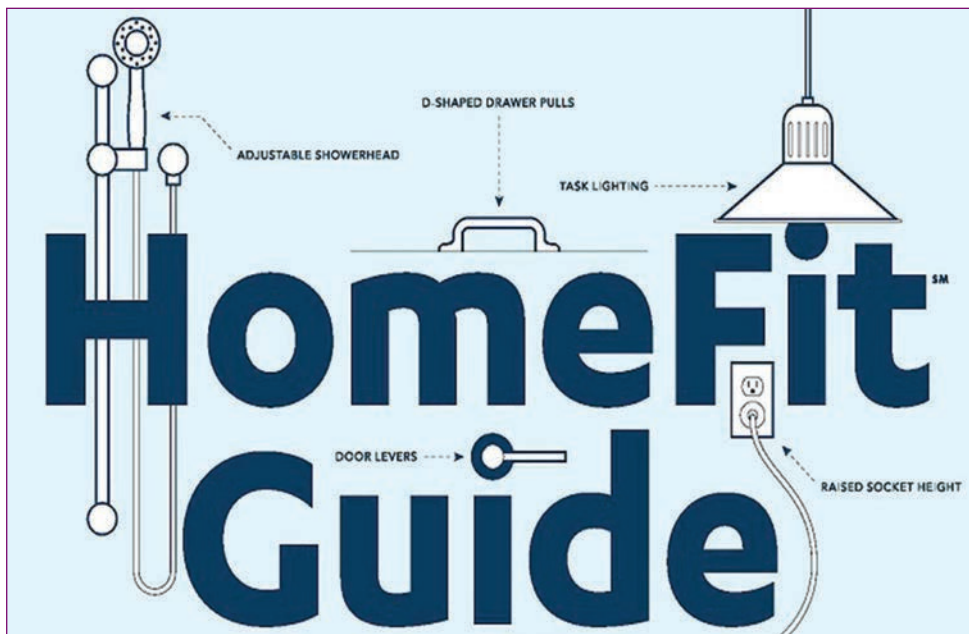
Aging in Place in Nassau County

BY MARY LEE BYRD, CAPS

Are you planning to age in place? Aging in place does not mean that you simply stay in your home as you age. It is important to develop an “aging in place plan” to determine whether your home meets your needs now – and will continue to meet your needs as you age. Your home should offer safe independent living, and the opportunity to socialize and keep your mind and body active. The community that you live in and your home environment are essential considerations for aging in place.

Nassau County is often dubbed “paradise” because of the many amenities it offers, and it has two major advantages to aging in place. First, Nassau County was recently designated as an AARP Livable Community which means that it is a safe and secure place for people of all ages to live. The second advantage is Nassau County Council on Aging (NCCOA). This organization contributes significantly to making Nassau County an age-friendly place to live by providing activities, services and opportunities that are needed for successfully aging in place.

Most of today’s homes are not conducive to aging in place and will need to be modified to incorporate universal design features. Universal design modifications address solutions to home safety, accessibility and comfort that complement the home’s aesthet-



ics. So how do you determine what/ if home modifications are needed for aging in place? You might begin by asking yourself what modifications would make it possible to:

- Enjoy your home now and as you grow older?
- Return home if you have an injury or accident?
- Live comfortably if you have a disability?
- Invite all your friends over, including people who use wheelchairs?

Universal design home modifications range from simple do-it-yourself projects to improvements that require skilled expertise. Some typical modifications include widening doorways; installing pull-out storage in kitchen and bathroom cabinets; providing lever handles on doors and plumbing

fixtures; installing a hand-held adjustable showerhead and grab bars for easier bathing; and providing at least one no-step entrance to the home. A good source for aging in place home modification information is the *Home Fit Guide*, published by AARP and available online or in print at <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarp-home-fit-guide-aging-in-place.html>.

You have probably heard the saying, “We don’t plan to fail, we fail to plan.” It is never too soon to develop an aging in place plan. The advantages to living in Nassau County combined with universal design home modifications will enable you to prepare for the issues you are going to face as you age without compromising quality of life.

Mary Lee Byrd is an interior designer, Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) and NCCOA volunteer.



Thank You

- Thank you so much for caring for us older folks during this time. I appreciate it [so] much. God bless.
- Thank you for the mask included with [my Mother’s] meals. She is very touched...
- We just received our first [Meals on Wheels] boxes and they are amazing. Thank you all so very much... May God bless you.

Combating Loneliness

BY PATRICIA BARRETO, PhD

Born and raised in Havana where older adults are venerated, I have drawn satisfaction from envisioning life in my older years since I was a kid. As a rebellious child, the thought of reaching the life stage where nobody would question my rules brought comfort to my soul. That vision has morphed to match my evolving mind as I age. But whatever shape that dream takes, there is always an independent person in it. When asked to write this article on living independently in older adulthood, a paradox came to mind. An independent, healthy life is inevitably interwoven with love and human connections. The most important connection in this context is our connection to ourselves, brought about by our capacity to love and open ourselves to others. When it comes to quality of life at any age, the lack of relational connection, or what we call loneliness, is our enemy.

Loneliness increases the risk of death and life-limiting illnesses, operating through physical pathways. Lonely people are more likely to have coronary heart disease and stroke, and the increased risk of death in lonely people is more severe than the risk associated with hypertension or obesity. This is because those who are lonely experience life events as more psychologically stressful, which translates into a chronically activated cardiovascular system, increased depression, and decreased resources to fight tumors and viral infections. Loneliness is also associated with cognitive decline and has been shown to double the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

It is ironic that I am writing this article during a pandemic and social distancing is required. (It is also ironic that gas and plane tickets are cheap, but we cannot travel). Our current situation, the simultaneous need to



reduce physical distance and increase human connection, is a challenge.

Here is how to foster such connection as we fight loneliness to stay healthy and independent during the pandemic and beyond:

- **Spend time in nature** – Besides the sound of the ocean, our beach town is home to lush, powerful trees that have been alive for centuries. Hiking and biking trails are accessible to all on Amelia Island. Research suggests that being in nature can produce a sense of social connectedness, even when we are doing it alone. It reminds us we are part of something bigger than ourselves, giving us a more expansive perspective.
- **Nourish your body** – We sometimes forget that our physical and mental health are finely intertwined. Be as physically active as you can be. Eat foods that make your brain happy (always discuss dietary changes with your primary care physician). Generally, we cannot go

wrong with colorful fruits and vegetables. The micronutrients found in them significantly improve mood and increase focus and energy levels. There is something remarkable about being kind to our bodies. In doing so, we are delivering an important message to ourselves: We are worthy. We are good enough. And feeling good enough means feeling we have something to offer and a reason to connect.

- **Hear somebody's voice** – Not surprisingly, when it comes to emotional support, hearing somebody's voice is more healing than reading an email or a text from the same person. That is because vocal communication has been shown to increase the levels of the love and trust hormone oxytocin, which can promote warm feelings of love, social bonding and well-being. So, next time you are ready to text a friend, call instead.

- **Join the virtual crowd** – Just like hearing somebody's voice

promotes feelings of love and well-being, seeing our loved one's facial expressions produces a similar effect. While we practice social distancing, applications such as Zoom and Facebook are our best friends. These are venues for video conferencing that provide opportunities for group meetings and engagement in meaningful activities virtually. I created a book club on Facebook called "The Quarantine Book Club." It has 100 members currently and is open to the public. Now on our second book, we

have weekly conversations about the characters, the writing and our stories. You are welcome to join!

- **Connect with yourself** – I read somewhere that if we are not happy with ourselves – and by ourselves – we will always feel lonely in the company of others. Being connected to the self is not about being self-centered but the opposite. It is a state where our body, soul and mind are all connected, to a degree that we feel it is ok to open our hearts to others. The journey toward achieving this

is different for everyone. It involves taking care of our bodies, slowing down, fostering and connecting with what inspires us, and being mindful of our place and purpose in the universe. It involves listening to our hearts while suspending judgment about others. This takes courage because it requires us to stare at our flaws long enough to accept or change them. But once we cross that bridge, we will be on the road to living a meaningful and independent life.

Patricia Barreto, PhD,
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Amelia Behavioral Wellness LLC



Thank You



I just have to thank you guys. This is a blessing – especially in times like this. The gentleman who brought the meals out last week just brought a smile to my face. It really makes my father happy. It is especially nice for people who don't have much.



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The Art and Science of Making Lemonade . . .

BY BARBARA BRUCE, MS

You have a great power within you that no one can take away – the power to choose how you see your world. (I can hear you saying, “Yeah, right.”)

One of the positive aspects emerging from our COVID-19 challenges is that people are becoming more creative and discovering new things about themselves (a.k.a. making lemonade out of a “lemon” situation). Take a moment and think about three positive things you have done, heard or seen within the last few difficult months that support “making lemonade.” I’ll bet you can relate to at least one of these:

- **CLEAN CLOSETS** – Closets around the world have never been this culled and organized. If you’ve been meaning to do this for a while, now you have time to do it! Gently worn articles of clothing can be washed and delivered to Second Chance and Barnabus.
- **CLEAN COMPUTER** – Edit the people from your contact list that you have absolutely no knowledge of who they are and what they’re doing on your computer.
- **CLEAN DESK DRAWERS** – Do you see a pattern emerging?
- **MAKE TIME (AND SPACE) TO CONNECT WITH FOLKS** – We are “herd” creatures...we need each other. To answer this essential need, meet (have personal lawn chair and cup of coffee – will travel) in an open space and keep at least 6 feet apart.
- **MEET NEIGHBORS** – Who are those people who live in your neighborhood? Stay safe and get to know them.
- **CHECK ON FRIENDS** – Call at least 1-2 friends each day to check up and chat about how they’re doing. Stay connected!
- **KEEP YOUR BRAIN ACTIVE** – Jigsaw puzzles, word searches, Sudoku, board games...they’re all good.
- **READ** – Books keep your mind active and are terrific lemon-busters. Many books also have movies on Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc.
- **GARDEN** – All the spring growth is benefiting from TLC they’re receiving from folks staying close to



home. You can even share your coffee (acidic soil enhancer) to make them strong and healthy.

- **EXERCISE** – Walk, jog, bike, hike, dance...whatever makes you happy and gets oxygen-rich blood flowing through your body.
- **LAUGH** – Laughter IS the best medicine. When we laugh our brains release endorphins that have a positive effect on our brain and body.
- **COLOR** – Express yourself in any medium...paint, chalk, photography, even crayons!
- **COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS** – List at least three things every day that you are thankful for. It provides much-needed attitude adjustment.

So back to the original thought – YOU are in control of how you see your world. You and you alone can shape your attitude to guide your life. Just do it.

Barbara Bruce, MS,
Aging Well Facilitator



Thank You

I'm really impressed with the service you provide for the community. I think it is wonderful! My husband and I are grateful for the service to help us stay safe. Congratulations to your organization and volunteers for farsighted humane generosity.



Seniors & Technology: A Winning Combination for Growth and Entertainment

BY JUDY RAGGI MOORE, PhD

Amelia Island offers us many opportunities for the enrichment of our artistic sensitivities and for the development of our intellectual curiosities. Nassau County Council on Aging (NCCOA) is unique in that its mission is to nurture body, spirit and mind all within the same welcoming and encouraging environment.

I came upon the NCCOA quite by accident last year. At the prospect of imminent retirement from Emory University after 35 years of teaching, I confided in a new island friend that I was feeling uncertain about the prospect of no longer having students to challenge, syllabi to write and most importantly for me – courses to research. No sooner than I had met several NCCOA leaders, I was teaching a series of classes on the development of Italian culture, the cradle of Western Civilization, with the prospect of language classes for the next season.

The experience was wonderful, and I was excited to start planning for the next semester. Then coronavirus and all its damaging effects hit the island, and NCCOA was obliged to temporarily shut its physical doors. Undaunted, NCCOA has intensified outreach initiatives to seniors, while also employing technology to provide a connection to growth and entertainment. A wonderful example of this is Bob Bolan's series on politics and international affairs, called "Tuesday Topics." (Bob is a pro bono consultant for NCCOA's Board of Directors.)

While waiting for NCCOA's facilities to reopen, here are some free opportunities for the enrichment of the intellect that I have enjoyed in the past and continue to benefit from while confined to my home.

- Coursera - <https://www.coursera.org/>

Through Coursera, pioneer in Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platforms, I am currently enrolled in a course on Greek Mythology taught by a University of Pennsylvania professor.

- Harvard's edX - <https://www.edx.org/>

Through edX, another MOOC pioneer platform, I am enjoying a course on classical music taught by a Harvard University professor.

- I regularly watch and enjoy the various art modules



offered through Khan Academy - <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

- I also recommend checking out the "COVID-combating" online courses currently offered by these free and reputable MOOC platforms:

- FutureLearn - <https://www.futurelearn.com/>

- CognitiveClass (scientific topics) -

- <https://cognitiveclass.ai/>

- iversity - <https://iversity.org/>

- The Open University, UK - <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/free-courses>

The opportunities for intellectual engagement, even within the confines of our homes, are limitless and I encourage everyone to give it a try. Happy online learning and "Arrivederci!"

Note: NCCOA does not endorse nor recommend specific providers; resources are provided for informational purposes only.

Dr. Judy Raggi Moore

Professor Emerita, Emory University



Thank You



Thank you so much for the meal package received yesterday. The food is delicious, and caringly packaged. Your services are very much appreciated, certainly including the transportation assistance that you have provided to me.

It's Today – My Favorite Day

BY BOB BOLAN, PhD

"What day is it?" asked Pooh.

"It's today," squeaked Piglet.

"My favorite day," said Pooh.

This core bit of philosophy from A.A. Milne can be a big help to all of us as we engage in or recover from the pandemic of 2020. We can learn from the past, but we can't change it. We can plan for future possibilities, but we can't assure ourselves that things won't change. What we can do is live well in the current moment. Here are some thoughts about living well now that are adapted from an article in *For Seniors Magazine*.

Smile

The magazine reports that a scientific analysis of dozens of studies on facial expression and emotion found a small but significant effect. Scowling can make you feel more upset; smiling can make you feel happier and so on. Step up to the mirror and give yourself a smile!

Kind Thoughts

According to the magazine, people who were instructed to wish happiness upon everyone they saw ended up feeling better themselves. We've all had this happen – when someone smiles and says a kind "Hello" as we walk; it makes us both feel better and be more likely to also say a kind word to the next person we see. Kindness is catching!

Get Creative

The American Psychological Association highlights creative activities which provide an emotional boost. These include drawing, singing, storytelling or anything that you enjoy. Go for it!

Pray and Meditate

Prayer and meditation release oxytocin, the hormone that supports good feelings about our connections. Prayer, meditation and mindfulness give you the time and setting to reflect on feelings and thoughts that are the real you. Some challenges and issues you can't control; meditation helps you be in touch with the thoughts and



ILLUSTRATION BY E.H. SHEPARD

feelings you can and do control. Get inside yourself. You have good things in there!

Get Moving

All you have to do is walk. Our bodies are meant for moving around. The idea is to help the oxygen in our blood get to all the ends of our fingers and toes. Studies show that any kind of increased activity benefits our mood and makes us happier. Be a mover and a shaker!

Help Others

Volunteering time or donating money to a good cause can induce a sort of "helpers high," triggering the release of hormones that help your brain feel good. There are lots of ways to help: make face masks, deliver food or PPE, help neighbors with their grocery shopping, call to reassure a senior living alone or just share this *Senior Life* magazine article. Reach out!

Bob Bolan, PhD, is a wellness advocate, current pro bono consultant for the NCCOA Board of Directors, lifelong learning volunteer instructor and co-founder of the Survivors of Suicide (SOS) Support Group.



Thank You



- Thank you for all you do for seniors and their families in Nassau County.
- I wanted to tell you how much we enjoy the meals. And it is such a load off of my mind that we don't have to go out—I'm 85 and my husband is 89. Your service is marvelous – just marvelous!
- I am so grateful—I can't even begin to thank you enough.

Membership Dollars Support Our Seniors!

When you join NCCOA's Fernandina Beach Life Center, you can feel good knowing that your membership dollars are helping fund programs and services for seniors in Nassau County. Now is the perfect time to join when you may have a little extra time. Then, when the Life Centers have reopened you can hit the ground running. In addition to supporting one of the most

vulnerable populations, members receive discounts on presentations, classes and activities. You will also receive invitations to special events throughout the year. We also thank our members with monthly prize drawings.



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To join or renew online, go to www.nassaucountycoa.org/membership or send an email to Melody Dawkins, Membership & Community Engagement Director, at mdawkins@nassaucountycoa.org. Include your name, address, phone number(s), email address and full date of birth (used for grant funding purposes only).

Membership cost:

Individual:

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Couple:

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Part-time Resident Quarterly \$40

For updates and information on NCCOA's Fernandina Beach and Hilliard Life Centers, visit www.nassaucountycoa.org/membership and [Facebook.com/nassaucountycoa/](https://www.facebook.com/nassaucountycoa/).



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SOURCE: *The Stelter Company*

Your financial and charitable goals are a reflection of your commitment to support the future of your loved ones, charitable organizations you value – such as Nassau County Council on Aging (NCCOA) – and the greater community. But it can be difficult to keep track of the organizations you wish to support and the documents required to receive your benefits from charitable gifts.

A convenient and easy way to organize your charitable intentions is to create a donor advised fund. Here's how it works:

1. You open a donor advised fund with a written agreement at a community foundation or sponsoring organization.
2. You can make contributions to your fund at any time. These contributions are invested by the sponsoring organization, which provides regular accounting to you.
3. You make the recommendations that various amounts be distributed to charitable organizations of your choice, such as NCCOA.
4. You can turn your donor advised fund into a lasting legacy by naming NCCOA as a beneficiary of your account.

When choosing where to set up your donor advised fund, be sure to choose the sponsoring organization carefully. You'll want to make sure the one you select supports your values. Take time to carefully read their policies and procedures and review their administration or investment fees.



Benefits of a Donor Advised Fund

- You qualify for a federal income tax charitable deduction when you make a gift to the fund.
- You do not have to retain records for each contribution.
- Families can build a tradition of giving by involving children in the decisions of which grants to recommend.

Source: The Stelter Corporation – This information is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor.

Let's Work Together

If you would like more information on setting up a donor advised fund to support NCCOA's mission, please contact Wallace Bennett, Development Director, at 904-775-5481 or wbennett@nassaucountycoa.org.

Wallace Bennett, NCCOA
Development Director



Thank You



I can't believe how wonderful it was to receive the meals. The timing was so perfect – I'm definitely staying home and have had kind people shopping for me. You changed that when you delivered the meals! I no longer had to feel so isolated – someone cared enough to fix me dinner and the variety was delicious. I'm so grateful for the wonderful meals you shared with us. Thank you and bless the hands that prepared it for us – and the wonderful, kind people who delivered the food. I feel truly blessed to be a recipient of these wonderful meals. Take care and God bless you and all that you serve.

Support Groups

Please contact NCCOA at 904-261-0701 for updated information on these programs.

▲ Starting Over and Reconnecting Support Group

Group discussions focus on how to reconnect during transitions of life whether it be for divorce, death, depression, job loss, retirement, parenting as a grandparent, etc.

▲ Whispers Laryngectomy Support Group

Designed to help people who have had laryngectomies cope with daily challenges, exchange latest information and ideas, and provide support and encouragement for living a fulfilling life.

▲ Hearing Loss Support Group

Group discussions focus on hearing loss, how hearing loss impacts everyday living, your brain and your ability to keep socially engaged and live a fulfilling life.

▲ SOS Survivors of Suicide Support Group

This is an open support group intended for people who have lost a member of their family or a close friend to suicide. For emergency assistance, dial 9-1-1 or the National Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

▲ Low Vision Support Group

Provides information on adaptive devices and encourages members with vision challenges to share experiences

through group discussions and guest speaker presentations.

▲ Veterans Support Group (Formerly Coffee with Comrades)

Join a group of veterans for a cup of coffee and snacks. This ritual dates back to times in the field or aboard ship when active-duty military personnel got together and talked about anything and everything. This monthly discussion provides an opportunity for veterans to be heard and receive information. Group-led topics are featured as well as guest speakers to assist with benefits and other requested topics.

▲ Parkinson's Support Group

Discussions for people living with Parkinson's disease, including caregivers, spouses and their loved ones.

▲ Caregivers Support Group

Offers support and education for caregivers. It is not suited for loved ones to attend; however, all caregivers are welcome. Guest speakers are often featured.

▲ NAMI Support Group

Support group for individuals, family members and friends impacted by mental illness. Offered by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Assistance Programs

Please contact NCCOA at 904-261-0701 for updated information on these programs.

▲ Assistance Through Government-Subsidized Programs –

NCCOA is the lead agency for the Florida Department of Elder Affairs' state and federally funded grant programs. Potential clients are screened and prioritized according to their needs.

▲ CHORE (Small Home Repair Program) –

Volunteers help with small home repairs and other assistance (such as a ramp), providing the safety and security to help seniors remain in their home.

▲ Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program (EHEAP)

assists senior citizens 60 years of age and over in paying their past-due electric bill once during the heating or cooling seasons. Eligibility includes: senior living in the household in Nassau County; a past-due electric bill; and income determination.

▲ Fall Prevention –

Provides free, non-medical in-home assess-

ments and recommends community resources to help prevent falls for Nassau County seniors.

▲ Free Legal Assistance

for Nassau County residents. Jacksonville Legal Aid is available at no cost by appointment to assist with topics such as health care proxy, power of attorney, family law, consumer and housing issues, as well as other matters.

▲ Home Health Services –

Provides non-medical in-home services to homebound seniors that help them live independently in their home or the home of a loved one.

▲ Meals on Wheels & Meals on Wheels for Pets

are available for homebound seniors.

▲ SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders) Program

provides free, one-on-one insurance information to Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers.



Thank You



I cannot tell you how much we appreciate your thoughtfulness. Just wanted to say "Thank you" and God bless. P.S. I am "cooking" now so you will know everything is so much better.



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We're dedicated to continuing this important mission. It's a privilege to serve your health care needs and we thank you for your continued loyalty.

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