“Mental health...is not a destination, but a process. It's about how you drive, not where you're going.”

– Noam Shpancer, Ph.D.

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER AND OURSELVES

This fall, Sarah Gurtis, COA’s President & CEO, offers a message on taking care of yourself (see next page). An important group that takes care of COA and the elderly in our community is our Board of Directors. Meet this impressive group of community shakers and movers on pages 4 and 5. Then take some time to get to know one of COA’s longest-serving employees, Lisa Lewis.

When it comes to caring for each other, see what ancient Floridians have in common with COA on page 7—and note that October is Guardianship Month! If you’re not sure what Guardianship is (or its importance), please don’t miss this article.

And please see our article on Emotional Wellbeing. While the holiday season is a joyful time for many, there are many others who are isolated and in need of care. If you are feeling lonely or depressed this season (or any time), we offer some resources as well as some ideas for those who might want to reach out to others. Lastly, as Veterans Day approaches, it is important to honor and remember those who have risked all for our country.

We wish you a healthy and enjoyable holiday season!
AND “just like that” the year is coming to an end. I remember my grandmother once saying to me that life is like a roll of toilet paper; the closer you get to the end of the roll, the faster it goes. And, it’s true.

We decided to focus this issue of Senior Matters on well-being and mental health. Many factors are involved in our overall sense of wellbeing. Health issues can knock you for a loop whether they are yours or a close friend or family member. Financial strains, a relocation from a long time residence and just the continuing evolution of a family means constant change, and change can be stressful.

We recently had an All Staff meeting for our COA employees. Many of them are Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) who provide in-home care to both our grant and private pay clients. Our case managers insure that we are getting as many services out as the government funding allows. Schedulers work tirelessly to get our caregivers to the clients on the days and times needed. We have guardians, senior center staff, respite workers, nutrition specialists, accounting staff, customer service, human resource professionals…a team of more than 100 people focused on caring for our elderly here in Volusia County.

STRESS MANAGEMENT was an important presentation on our agenda. A presenter focused on how important it is to make our own health and wellbeing a priority. She reminded us that we can’t help everyone we want to help and be there for those we love if we are not well and strong ourselves.

I began the year encouraging everyone to make the New Year’s resolution to update all of their legal documents including Power of Attorney, Medical Surrogate, Living Will, etc. I made that resolution myself and my paperwork is now in place. So…let’s not wait until January to make caring for ourselves a priority. Get enough sleep. Eat well. Exercise. Be kind. Learn something new every day.

God bless – have a joyful holiday season and take care of you.
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During Council on Aging’s last fiscal year (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019), we welcomed four new board members:

Ben Eby joined the COA board this past June. A Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Management Accountant, Ben serves as the director of Halifax Health-Hospice. A resident of Florida since 2013, he is involved with Christ Community Church and volunteers with Take Stock in Children and the Rotary Club of Port Orange-South Daytona.

Jordan Jiloty, a lifetime resident of Ormond Beach, was elected to the board during our June meeting. He has served as the senior director of Public and Government Affairs with NASCAR since 2008. In addition to serving on the COA board, Jordan is vice chair of the TEAM (Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management) Coalition and serves on the Executive Committee of the Team Volusia EDC (Economic Development Corporation) and on the board of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Bob Lloyd, the executive vice president, secretary, and general counsel at Brown & Brown, Inc., was elected to the COA board of directors in February 2019. Prior to joining Brown & Brown 20 years ago, Bob was an associate attorney with Cobb Cole, where he specialized in labor and employment law. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Daytona Regional Chamber of Commerce and Raydon Corporation.

Linda Webster is the regional manager of External Affairs at Florida Power & Light, focusing on the counties of Volusia, Seminole, and Flagler. Prior to joining FPL in 2015, she served as the CFO and CEO of the Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce. In addition to her role with COA, Linda serves as chair of the Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce and treasurer of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation. She also serves on the board of directors of the Volusia County Futures Foundation, the Halifax Health Foundation, Conklin Center for the Blind, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida.

At COA’s September 2019 board meeting, four board members were elected directors emeritus:

Bob Holland has served on the COA board of directors for 17 years, serving as vice president for three years and chairman for two years.

Jim Maniak has served on the board for 12 years, acting as treasurer for one year, vice president for one year, and secretary for three years.

Sharon Mock has served on the COA board of directors for a decade, serving as chair for
Connie Ritchey has served on the COA board for 14 years, serving as chair for one year. She will continue to serve as COA’s event chairman.

Thank you to all Council on Aging board members—those who have served many years, those who continue to serve, and those recently welcomed. Your leadership has been and continues to be indispensable to ensuring that local seniors receive the services they need to remain safely, comfortably, and with dignity in their own homes.

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Please consider supporting COA during our end-of-year giving campaign.

Check our website in November at www.coavolusia.org or call 386-253-4700 x 215.

Each gift makes a difference! Thank you!
Lisa Lewis joined COA as a community service worker in 1983 after receiving her bachelor’s degree from Bethune-Cookman University. Her responsibilities at the time involved going into the community—sometimes door-to-door—to talk to people about what services COA could offer the senior population. “I saw many elderly people who were too proud to ask for help even though I could tell they needed it,” she says, adding, “I never dreamed that 36 years later, the community would have grown like it has and there would be such need.”

Through the years, Lisa worked as a case manager, a lead case manager, and was eventually promoted to vice president of Case Managed Services. In between promotions, she returned to school to earn a master’s degree in Business Administration. Today, she supervises and mentors six case managers who assess client needs, prepare care plans, and coordinate and oversee services. In addition to overseeing the services provided to clients, Lisa also monitors and conducts staff trainings and handles grant reporting.

“I love what I do,” she says, adding, “It’s been very fulfilling to help people in my neighborhood and the community at large and make sure that they receive the necessary care.”

Lisa says that what has most changed through the years is the growing need in the community and COA’s pace working to keep up with that need. “We have grown from running two programs to operating several, providing services for clients with early-stage Dementia as well as Alzheimer’s, operating a robust Meals on Wheels program, and providing Home Care for the Elderly and Community Care for the Elderly. We also now offer private pay services to those who don’t qualify for grant-funded services.”

When Lisa isn’t at work helping others, she enjoys Caribbean cruises, attending church, reading, and spending time with her husband of 36 years, Curtis. She also enjoys her family of five children and eight grandchildren.

COA is grateful for Lisa’s many years of service to the organization and community as we celebrate her 36th anniversary with us!
In 1982, a backhoe operator named Steve Vanderjagt came upon one of the greatest archaeological finds in our nation—right in our backyard. The Windover Bog, just south of Titusville, contained 168 skeletal remains that were approximately 7000-8000 years old (there are likely more yet to be uncovered). Not only did the site provide new information on humans in the Archaic period of North America—details about burial practices, tool use, clothing, food storage, and hunting—but the underwater cemetery also revealed discoveries about how these early Floridians cared for one another.

Archaeologists examined one skeleton of a woman who died in her fifties. Her bones told the story of numerous injuries well before her death, debilitating fractures that would have prevented her from functioning as an able-bodied clan member. In order for this woman to have lived as long as she did, others in the community clearly cared for her. A more well-known case from the Windover Bog is that of a teenaged boy who had spina bifida and a severely deformed foot, both of which would have caused serious mobility issues. In need of assistance for everyday survival, the boy obviously relied on the clan to take care of him throughout his life. While these findings surprised researchers, haven’t human beings always cared for those in their families and communities?

8,000 years later, in 2013, Governor Rick Scott proclaimed October as Guardianship Month in the State of Florida to “...provide an important voice for Florida’s most vulnerable populations.” When it comes to taking care of the most vulnerable in our community, it may seem that not much has changed since the Windover Bog people hunted, fished, and gathered food only 50 miles south of us. But it has. In just the 52 years since Council on Aging of Volusia County (COA) was founded, families and communities have changed dramatically. For one, the family has become smaller. Two-parent households as well as the number of households that include extended family members continue to be on the decline. Since the 1970s, the percentage of US residents having four or more children has

Guardianship involves designating someone to exercise the legal rights of those who are no longer able to handle their own affairs or make their own decisions.

COA’s Guardianship Team

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dropped significantly. And here in Florida, we see thousands of parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents arriving to retire after leaving their home states—and family members. Meanwhile, working adults, the children of these retirees, are more mobile, with relocation to other states for jobs more common than ever. And it is no longer unusual for single people to remain single as they enter their senior years. Then, of course, there is widowhood. While the family is smaller and there are, for many, fewer family members close by, people are also living longer. The result is that there are more seniors who need to rely on assistance from those outside of their families. Through COA’s mission to enable local seniors to remain safely and comfortably in their own homes, our programs strive to meet the needs of the local elderly population. One of these programs is Guardianship, which serves some of the most at-risk in our community.

Guardianship involves designating someone to exercise the legal rights of those who are no longer able to handle their own affairs or make their own decisions. Being legally determined incapacitated is often due to age-related illness such as Dementia, Alzheimer’s Disease, or Parkinson’s. Other reasons might include developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and mental health problems.

The function of a guardian is to look after the social, psychological, direct service, health, and personal needs of the person under guardianship. COA assists when friends or family members are unwilling or unable to take on this role. As professional guardians, we create care plans and then make arrangements for medical, mental, rehabilitative, and/or personal care services. We also make sure that the clients’ bills are paid, and we ensure that the person under guardianship is living in a safe and suitable home or facility.

But guardianship is more than paying bills and getting clients to necessary appointments. COA’s professional guardians visit clients at least twice a month and work to make them comfortable. We have been known to bring milkshakes to those who love ice cream; to take clients out to engage in activities such as dancing or bowling; we provide DVDs of chair yoga and other exercise for those with mobility issues; and are diligent about our clients getting regular haircuts and remaining neat and clean.

“Our aim,” one COA professional guardian says, “is to capitalize on the abilities of the person under guardianship rather than to focus on any disabilities.” Which is, we imagine, what the Windover Bog people did so long ago.

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The Winnderow Archaeological Site exhibit can be seen at the Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science, located in Cocoa. For information, call 321-632-1830 or visit the museum's website at myfloridahistory.org/brevardmuseum.
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Look for more photos in the Winter edition of Senior Matters!
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For many, the holiday season is a time of reconnecting with friends and family, relaxing, and enjoying some leisure time. But for many others, the season can trigger an enhanced sense of loneliness and more intense feelings of stress and depression. According to the National Institute on Aging, social isolation and loneliness—the primary emotional stressors among the elderly—are directly related to depression and anxiety, and have a negative domino effect on the immune system and therefore health in general. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reminds us that depression is not a normal part of growing older and is generally a treatable problem.

Seniors are at an increased risk of loneliness and isolation due to factors such as retirement, change of environment, the death of a spouse, lack of transportation, decreased mobility, and/or grief over the loss of other family members and friends. National Public Radio reported that suicide rates across the country have been on the rise, but this crisis “has struck the nation’s seniors particularly hard.” In 2017, those 65 and older, making up nearly 15% of the country’s population, accounted for more than 18% of all suicides. Men age 65 and older face the highest risk, while adults 85 and older, regardless of gender, constitute the second most likely group to die from suicide. This could be due in part to the fact that depression is under-recognized and often untreated or under-treated in older adults, according to the CDC. In addition, older adults are reportedly less likely to talk about any psychiatric symptoms and more likely to instead emphasize physical complaints. Meanwhile, the US Census Bureau reports that there were 47.8 million people over the age of 65 in the US in 2015, and this number is projected to more than double over the next 40 years. The emotional wellbeing of our seniors is something that must be addressed.

How do we help? In addition to assuring that seniors have their basic needs met—nutritious food, adequate housing, necessary medical care, proper hydration, and freedom from any type of abuse—there are other critical ways to prevent or relieve emotional pain and mental health issues that arise from loneliness and isolation. Human contact is the obvious key remedy. “Be More Us,” a United Kingdom program working to combat loneliness and isolation among people of all ages, provides some tips which are useful for those who might

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feel lonely, isolated, and depressed as well as those who would like to reach out to elderly family members and neighbors who need and desire more caring human interaction. COA added a few ideas of our own:

- **Get involved** in your community. Get to know your neighbors. Use local papers such as the Hometown News to learn about various community groups and activities. Can you get a ride to meetings with a neighbor or friend—or can you offer a ride?
- **Call a friend or relative.** Take the time and reach out. And once you reach out, be sure to listen.
- **Invite someone for a drink**—yes, it can be water, soda, or tea. Invite them to your home if you have difficulty getting out. If you’re going to someone else’s home, offer to bring something.
- **Gifts** (including baked goods) and cards go a long way. Write a letter!
- **Join a club**—or come to a COA Senior Center! Make it a habit to make reservations to have lunch at a COA Dining Site, where you have the opportunity to socialize and make new friends. COA works with Votran so that our seniors are able to get to our Senior Centers and Dining Sites.
- **Learn something new.** You can learn a new language, try your hand at painting, participate in music activities or enjoy a new exercise (and new friendships) by getting involved in COA Senior Centers.
- **Volunteer!** COA Senior Centers, Dining Sites, our Respite Care program, and our Meals on Wheels program are always in need of volunteers. Call us! 386-253-4700 x 204.
- **Exercise.** Better yet, exercise in a group setting. COA Senior Centers all offer exercise classes, from Chair Zumba to Chair Yoga and Tai Chi.

COA Senior Center and Dining Site locations and activity information are listed on our website: www.coavolusia.org. Click on “Senior Centers and Dining Sites,” then scroll down to find the center nearest you and click on “Current Menu” and/or “Monthly Activities.”

In addition to COA, there are other resources for both seniors who need some help and those who are concerned about a senior—or anyone they know—who may be experiencing mental health issues:


SMA Behavioral Healthcare: 888-516-2296
Hotline: 800-539-4228

Mental Health America of East Central Florida: 386-252-5785

It is important to remember that the process of emotional well-being is accessible to all of us.

**What are possible indications of a mental health concern?**

- Significant behavior changes, including new behaviors
- Changes in appearance
- Weight loss
- New or heightened problems maintaining the home
- Confusion, disorientation, or issues with concentration or decision-making
- Increased use or abuse of alcohol or medications
- Changes in mood; depressed mood lasting longer than two weeks
- Social withdrawal
- Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable
- Changes in mobility and balance
- New complaints about physical discomfort/aches and pains
- Unexplained/increased fatigue, energy loss, or sleep changes
- Expressed feelings of hopelessness and/or helplessness
- Talking about not wanting to live; talking about being a burden
- Giving away prized possessions
CARING FOR OUR VETERANS

As Veterans Day approaches, we are reminded of all that veterans have given, as well as ways we can honor them and give back year-round. COA proudly serves veterans throughout Volusia County, providing services such as Meals on Wheels, In-Home Services, Respite Care, and Guardianship.

In addition to the services COA offers to local veterans, the following organizations assist those who have served:

**Adaptive Technology Solutions**: A nonprofit organization, Adaptive Technology Solutions provides computers, computer classes, IT training, and adaptive technology for veterans and others with disabilities, although veterans need not have a disability to qualify for the program.

386-334-7698  www.adaptivesol.org

**CareerSource Flagler/Volusia Veteran Employment and Training Services**: Orange City: 386-561-9550/TDD: 711
Daytona Beach: 386-323-7001/TDD: 711
Palm Coast: 386-586-5169/TDD: 711
https://veterans.employflorida.com

**Daytona Beach Vet Center (US Dept of Veterans Affairs)**: 386-366-6600.
Mental health counseling for combat and Vietnam vets, financial workshops, yoga, and more.
Vet Center Call Center (for information): 1-877-927-8387

**Department of Veterans Affairs** – va.gov/service-member-benefits
Veterans Benefits Hotline – 1-800-827-1000

**Veterans Crisis Line**: 800-273-8255 and press 1
TTY – 800-799-4889
Veterans Crisis Line Text – 838255
VeteransCrisisLine.net

**Guitars for Vets**: Weekly guitar lessons provided through the HUB on Canal’s Veterans in Art program.
132 Canal Street, New Smyrna Beach, FL
386-957-3924  www.theHUBoncanal.org
Email David Maib at fl.po-nsb@guitarsforvets.org or call 612-202-6309. www.guitars4vets.org

**Rolling Thunder Chapter 8 Florida**: Represents and provides support to local veterans, active military and their families in Volusia County, focusing on veterans’ right and benefits.
www.rollingthunder1.com
email rollingthunderpr@aol.com

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CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS FOR VETERANS

By Eve Payor, Director of Community Programs, Atlantic Center for the Arts

Atlantic Center for the Arts partners with COA to share the arts as a path to connect creativity and health. Modes of expression are widely known to strengthen the spirit, encourage mental stimulation, socialization, and manage chronic pain. There are many healthcare providers that recommend engagement in the arts as a medical prescription to lower blood pressure, alleviate anxiety, reduce depression, increase physical mobility, and process trauma.

This creative prescription is now being recommended to veterans of Volusia County. A local group, Creative Expressions, is inspired by the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Forces (Military Healing Arts Network) and the University of Florida Department of Arts in Medicine. Atlantic Center for the Arts ambassadors M.B. McLatchey, Bethany Bennett, and Eve Payor lead veterans in creative activities, including writing, painting, and music at the Daytona Beach Vet Center. Vet Center Director Mary Fisher, LCSW is the head counselor and facilitates the Creative Expressions group every two weeks.

If you are a veteran or a family member of a veteran, you may contact the Daytona Beach Vet Center at (386) 366-6600 for eligibility requirements needed to participate.
Happy Holidays from Council on Aging of Volusia County!