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**Anne Arundel County  
Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council  
2023 Annual Report**

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**Steuart Pittman, County Executive**

Karrisa Kelly, Director of the Department of Aging and Disabilities (DoAD)

Russell Jones, Chair AAA Advisory Council

Becky Batta, Vice-Chair AAA Advisory Council

January 31, 2024

**Voting Members**

Angela Mickalide – Public At Large

Becky Batta - Pasadena Senior Activity Center

Jamarri Bright – Pascal Senior Activity Center

Kathy McNally – O’Malley Senior Activity Center

Kum Watson – Brooklyn Park Senior Activity Center

Mary Ann Yarbrough – Arnold Senior Activity Center

Roxanne McGowan - Public At Large & Community Action Agency

Russell Jones – South County Senior Activity Center

Shirley Norlem – Annapolis Senior Activity Center

**Department Members**

Karrisa Kelly - Director, Department of Aging and Disabilities

Joelle Ridgeway – Deputy Director, Department of Aging and Disabilities

Brandi Francis – Assistant Director, Disability and Community Services

Sarah Stein - Assistant Director, Aging and Disability Resource Center/Long Term Care

Kelly Mackall - Public Information Officer, Department of Aging and Disabilities

David Unterberger & Heidi Howard - Executive Assistant to Karrisa Kelly, Director

**Introduction**

The year 2023 has been a year of building and bringing back togetherness. The Anne Arundel County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council has been meeting in person and has offered a

hybrid option via Zoom since the pandemic. Throughout the year, our focus has been supporting our activity centers and communicating priorities and initiatives to the Department of Aging and Disabilities (DoAD) and other county partners during this time. Many positive changes and key initiatives have come from these priorities to benefit the older adult population in the county. All members of the council take great pride in advocating for the enrichment of the lives of older adults in the county and strive to meet County Executive Steuart Pittman's vision to Make Anne Arundel County - The Best Place For All.

### **Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council**

The Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council (AAAAC) is pleased to submit its 2023 Annual Report. The Older Americans Act of 1965 (Sec 1321.57) requires that each Area Agency on Aging (AAA) have an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council's purpose is to serve in an advisory capacity to the DoAD and the county executive, which will further the county's and area agency's mission of developing and coordinating community-based systems of services for all older persons in the planning and service area.

With the exception of July and August, the Advisory Council typically meets monthly on the third Friday at 10:00 am in the Independence Conference Room at the Heritage Office Complex, 2664 Riva Road, Suite 170, Annapolis, MD. These meetings have been offered via Zoom to promote a hybrid option.

Advisory Council members represent a cross-section of the county's diverse population, both culturally and geographically. Names of prospective members are forwarded to the county executive for appointment to a four-year, coterminous term. The Advisory Council does not provide direct services to older adults, but several of its members also volunteer at local senior activity centers and represent the department in their respective centers, as well as at large departmental events throughout the county. In 2023, the council advised the DoAD on a range of issues, including the following:

### **Representing the Interests of Older Adults in Anne Arundel County**

- The Advisory Council participated in planning the ribbon cutting and grand opening of the Severn Senior Activity Center which was held on June 12, 2023. There were around 700 participants and special guests to celebrate the first-of-its-kind community center in our county to benefit the intergenerational population in the Severn area. Connected to the senior activity center is a gym and a Boys and Girls Club. The senior activity center is equipped with a state-of-the-art fitness equipment room, aerobics room, craft room, and billiards room. There is a large multipurpose room and community room available for the public to use for events for people of all ages. This is the first center in the county to be open from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week.

- Older Americans Month 2023 was celebrated at the ribbon cutting for the Severn Senior Activity Center. Along with multiple special guests, there were community partners and county agencies exhibiting resources, food trucks, and lots of socialization with friends celebrating the accomplishments of older adults in Anne Arundel County. Ms. Glenda Gathers, otherwise known as “Ms. G”, had advocated strongly for this community center for many years and with the leadership of County Executive Steuart Pittman’s administration, this vision came to fruition. Governor Wes Moore gave remarks and greetings for the opening of this new center.
- The South County Senior Activity Center opened its doors on January 6, 2023, after a year of renovations and a 2,000 square foot expansion. This construction allows members of the center to enjoy additional programming and activities in the center to highlight innovative and member-driven services.
- The county executive has continued his promise to invest in the senior activity centers by approving the capital project request to renovate and expand the Arnold Senior Activity Center. The Advisory Council and center members advocated to secure renovation and construction which will tentatively begin in September 2024. Center members and the DoAD are working on an alternative site to attend programs and activities during the center’s closure.
- Advisory Council members were invited to participate in the Prescription Drug Affordability Forum held at the Annapolis Senior Activity Center. This was a forum held by the Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative to promote affordable health care for older adults in Anne Arundel County.
- Advisory Council members attended to represent the council at the annual DisAbility Awareness Day hosted by the DoAD and the Commission on Disability Issues (CODI). This year’s event was held in person again at the Westfield Annapolis Mall and offered over 25 exhibitors and entertainment to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The county executive helped CODI to recognize businesses and individuals who help improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. This year, Russell Jones, chair of the council, entertained the crowd with his guitar and vocal talents.
- Council members were asked to give comments and recommendations on legislation during the 2023 session. Some of the bills they were asked to comment on include tax credits for older adults, genetic testing, long-term care, election judges, health insurance, and hearing aids.
- Feedback for the Comprehensive Plan of Services for fiscal years 2024-2027. Martha Thorn, an Annapolis Senior Activity Center member, compiled a statement of work for the Advisory Council to include needs, resources, challenges, expectations, and goals to meet the needs of older adults in Anne Arundel County.

- Innovative programs and activities continue to be offered at the senior activity centers. Some new initiatives that have been a direct result of the advocacy of the council members include:
  - CPR classes offered to members in coordination with the Anne Arundel County Fire Department and the Office of Emergency Management.
  - Flu vaccination clinics offered at the centers in coordination with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health.
  - Lunch & Learn events, Healthy Habits and Fresh Conversations presentations offering healthy food options and nutrition education to cover fall prevention, smoking cessation, lung and other cancers, chronic disease management, food nutrition importance and benefits, and much more.
  
- Council members and the DoAD work closely with each other to prioritize key objectives for the needs of older adults in the county. Some of these objectives that the DoAD has coordinated and implemented are:
  - Hiring a Veteran’s Benefits Navigator to assist veterans with their benefits and build supportive partnerships to streamline this process.
  - Creating a partnership with the Senior Dog Sanctuary to offer free pet food and pet wellness clinics to promote affordability so older adult pet owners may keep their pets in their homes.
  - Working with Free State Justice to perform a self-evaluation of programs and services and to align these services with the needs of the LGBTQ community.
  - Continuing to partner with AARP to offer tax preparation assistance to residents of all ages in each of the centers.
  - Securing fresh food boxes in partnership with the Anne Arundel County Food Bank to offer free produce, meat, and dairy products to SNAP benefit recipients who had lost most of their benefits due to the state of emergency being lifted.
  - New audio/visual equipment and fitness equipment was obtained through the DoAD to update the centers’ existing equipment.
  - Department of Aging and Disabilities staff member, Alagra Bass, was invited to present about the new mental health initiative in coordination with senior activity center members and Anne Arundel County residents. She presented a survey to the Advisory Council and council members gave feedback about important questions to ask that would benefit the mental health of older adults in Anne Arundel County.

- *What's Up* Magazine designed the Directory cover, poly-wrapped the Directories, and delivered them via food giveaways and outreach events. Spanish editions were printed and distributed this year.
- Copies are also available online in English, Spanish, and Korean [HERE](#).
- Chair, Russell Jones, was recognized for demonstrating outstanding leadership and continued stewardship of our public resources while advocating for community needs. His work as Chair of the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council has helped provide critical resources and a supportive community to the older adults of Anne Arundel County.
- Becky Batta was voted in unanimously by the council as the new vice-chair.
- New membership at the senior activity centers continues to grow rapidly and classes and workshops fill up quickly. Three of the centers have hosted large Community Resource Fair to offer vital resources to older adults in the community.

### **Goals for Next Year**

- Coordinate with the DoAD to plan and execute the 2024 May Older Americans Month celebration event with the theme which is “Powered by Connection”.
- Continue to give feedback and recommendations to the county executive for current legislation.
- Advisory Council members will attend county outreach events that involve other county agencies in order to increase the presence of the local senior activity centers in various communities.
- Develop a strategy to begin the Longevity Ready Maryland initiative formed by Governor Wes Moore for Anne Arundel County.
- Comment and provide proofreading assistance for The Directory 2023-2024.
- Provide feedback for Anne Arundel County’s long-range planning initiatives.
- Create and implement a survey to gather pertinent information and needs from peers of what they would like to see offered through the DoAD.