



Commission on Aging

To: Louisa County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Christian Goodwin, County Administrator
Ms. Wanda Colvin, Director of Finance

From: Jonathan Tustin, President
Louisa County Commission on Aging.

Dear Supervisors,

The mission for the Louisa County Commission on Aging is to assess the needs and advocate for, the senior citizens of Louisa County with the goal of improving their quality of life. As the senior population in Louisa County continues to rise, the necessity for an engaged, resourceful Commission on Aging is paramount in order to serve this demographic.

The Commission on Aging (COA) has served the citizens of Louisa County for over 25 years. The majority of members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and represent their respective districts and the interests of the individuals residing in that district. The remaining members represent organizations that offer aging citizens services such as Louisa County Parks and Recreation and the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA), creating a civic partnership between citizens and the organizations that provide vital services. We also would like to thank the Board for appointing Mr. Willie Gentry as the representative from the Board. His leadership, engagement, comments and suggestions have been most helpful in our journey to recreate the Commission.

Over the last two decades, the COA has contributed to the community in several ways.

First: the COA was a primary leader in the development and building of the Betty J Queen Intergenerational Center, which was named after the, then, COA president.

Second: the COA published the Little Yellow book for 25 years providing a single source of reference for local and state resources across numerous categories. The Little Yellow Book is well-known with over 40,000 copies circulated. Many comments have been received over the years about the value the Little Yellow Book provides to seniors.

Third: The COA sponsors a holiday celebration that offers seniors of Louisa County an opportunity to come together as community reducing social isolation, providing an opportunity to express needs or concerns and encouraging participation in community center activities.

Over the last year the COA began revisiting its core mission and exploring the roles and services offered by other community organizations. The purpose of this work is to re-evaluate past goals

and strategically plan for the future looking for new partnerships and opportunities to understand and report on older adult issues on a local, state, and national scale. Being of valuable service to the Board and the community at-large is of the utmost importance to us as the COA looks to a new future of increased engagement. As a result of this introspection, the Commission has adopted the following goals and funding needed to fulfill them, for the next fiscal year:

Goal 1) Assess the needs of senior citizens in Louisa County, to report these findings and make recommendations.

In seeking to understand local issues, the COA looked nationally and regionally for assessment initiatives in order to understand and identify the needs of older adults. The Charlottesville Area Alliance is a collective of Albemarle County's regional partners who aim to boost awareness of senior issues and to lead the advancement of an age-friendly community. The Alliance conducted the AARP Livable Communities survey to understand the accessibility of key services. The COA is building on the Alliance data by continuing to reach out to people 50 and older in an effort to create a more comprehensive survey data on Louisa County regarding age-friendly measures. The COA will continue to conduct surveys until a representative sample is achieved, and then report those findings to the Board. Through understanding the opinions of residents in a structured way, the COA hopes to create a foundation for future work and more in-depth conversations.

Goal 2) Assist other senior organizations to provide senior oriented activities.

The COA would continue to sponsor an annual event bringing older adults together. The impact of social isolation is devastating for everyone but more significantly for older adults and no more so than during the holidays when the absence of family or social connections is far more evident.

- 17% of older adults 65 and older are considered isolated
- 26% have an increased risk of death due to the subjective feeling of being lonely
- 46% of women aged 75 and older live alone

Loneliness (also known as subjective isolation) denotes how people perceive their experience and whether or not they *feel* isolated. Objective isolation involves quantifiable measurements, such as the size of one's social network (and the frequency of engagement within it), availability of transportation, and ability to access resources and information.

Isolation is a growing health and social epidemic. As a part of the holiday program, the COA will offer seniors an opportunity to gather for a free meal, companionship and the ability to express needs or concerns to members of the Commission. The COA will engage with community partners to provide information on, and access to, support services, and to invite people to join the community center and participate in Parks and Recreation programming. Additionally, the COA will provide people with a self-assessment tool to raise awareness of their personal

situation. As a part of the holiday lunch, the COA will provide meals to identified homebound seniors with any remaining resources delivered by a volunteer.

Goal 3) Support access to community services

Accessing long-term services and support can be challenging. Navigating local community information and services can be equally challenging. The Little Yellow Book is a comprehensive collection of listings for local government as well as human services including local, state, and national resources on a wide variety of topics. The Yellow Book is unique in our region and the format is utilized by Fluvanna County as well. The COA with the support of JABA staff will extensively update and then host an online version for 2021.