

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

www.slocounty.ca.gov/coa.htm
slocommissiononaging@gmail.com

Tuesday, August 29, 2023

San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
Government Building
1055 Monterey, Room D430
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

Dear San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors:

We are pleased to submit to you the annual report for 2022 - 2023 of the San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging (SLOCOA). In accordance with our mandate, we are reporting to you on our progress in achieving the San Luis Obispo Commission on Aging Goals and Priority Issues for 2022 - 2023.

Prior to our return in July 2022, our last meeting was February 2020. The onset of the Covid Pandemic halted our meetings for 29 months. As the possibility of services and businesses reopening became apparent, Co-Chairs Maryanne Zarycka and Anita Shower worked hard to resubmit and gain approval for the updated SLOCOA bylaws submitted in 2019; contact former members for interest and build excitement of a revival; recruit new members to fill the slate; and contact possible monthly presenters, with the goal to revive the San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging in July 2022.

On July 27, 2022, SLOCOA held our “Revival 2022!” meeting with our primary discussion being “Revive, Regroup, Review, Recruit”. We are happy to report that attendance by former members, curious community members, and new prospective members was higher than anticipated and we were off to a great new start. We had several months of recruiting efforts to obtain a full slate, however, the enthusiasm and upbeat energy of this new revived Commission quickly spread, and membership grew quickly after a few months.

Our Commissioners serve without pay and are chosen for their knowledge and ability to represent diverse groups of Seniors throughout the county and in our various cities. Additionally, we are pleased that you have chosen to send representatives from your districts to serve on the Commission. They are joined by representatives from the Area Agency on Aging, AmeriCorps Seniors (RSVP), LTC Ombudsman, SLO Public Health Department, DSS Adult services and more.

Goal 1: Inform the public of services, events, and activities available to the Senior population; provide a countywide forum for Seniors to voice concerns; and reduce duplicative efforts by identifying services available to the Senior population and encouraging the coordination of activities and services countywide:

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We continue to utilize our Facebook account to provide information on SLOCOA activities, and to highlight both practical and educational opportunities offered by various groups throughout the county which are designed to appeal to Seniors. As more and more baby boomers reach Senior status, they increasingly rely on social media such as Facebook to stay up to date in areas of interest to them.

We have an ever-expanding email distribution list of people and agencies interested in our speaker presentations. All presenters and agency participants bring informational fliers regarding Senior services and events in the county which are distributed to all people attending the monthly meetings.

We established (and published) a Commission email account (slocommissiononaging@gmail.com) which agencies and the public may use to request information, ask questions, or forward information pertinent to Seniors. We also post our meetings on Facebook and our CLOCOA webpage under the DSS website (www.slocounty.ca.gov/coa.htm).

Since our return in 2022, Co-chair Maryanne Zarycka has worked very closely with the amazing DSS IT Team to revise and revamp the SLOCOA website. Some enhancements include increasing the font size for easier visibility for Seniors; adding links to the monthly fliers, agendas, meeting minutes, and special reports; and adding the power points to the approved minutes from the monthly presenters so they can be reviewed and accessed by the public.

Digital monthly meeting materials for printing and posting are distributed countywide through the Commission email to community members requesting to be on our distribution list, Senior centers, Senior living facilities, libraries, Senior newsletters, and others to inform the public of our meeting presenters and topics, and to provide the public a forum to voice their concerns.

Perhaps the most effective means of communicating matters of interest to the Senior community is accomplished by the presenters and their topics featured at each of our monthly meetings. We have had an amazing turnout this last year, the enthusiasm of the members and guests has been at an all-time high, and our presenters have been exceptional:

***July 2022 (First meeting after a 29-month pandemic break) - Presentation:
Revive, Regroup, Review, Recruit***

Presenters: Co-Chairs Anita Shower and Maryanne Zarycka

August 2022 - Who Will Speak For You? The Importance of Having an Advance Health Care Directive

Presenter: Kim Chartrand R.N., Care Manager, Hospice of SLO County

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September 2022 - Suicide Prevention for Older Adults Warning Signs, How to Help, and Resources

Presenters: Michael Bossenberry, Crisis Line Specialist, Relief worker
Brita Connelly, Program Mgr, Training and Outreach, Suicide Prevention Coordinator

October 2022 - Medicare Plans, Changes, and Choices 2023 Open Enrollment Oct 15-Dec 7, 2022

Presenter: Buff Lawson, HICAP Registered Counselor & Community Educator

November – no meeting Thanksgiving break

December 2022 - A Passion for Independence! Aging with the Right Support and Resources

Presenter: Jerry Mihaic, Community Info Coordinator Independent Living Resource Center, Inc.

January 2023 - Being Prepared for Emergencies - SLO County Disaster and Emergency Readiness

Presenter: James Blattler, Emergency Manager City of SLO Fire Department

February 2023 - Healthy Living makes an immeasurable difference in people's lives, particularly healthy living activities offered through volunteering and participation in programs at Senior Centers

Presenters: Alexis Okumura, Executive Director, Senior Volunteer Services
Michele Wright, Program Coordinator Paso Robles Senior Center

March 2023 - Senior Housing Options - Navigating the Choices; Independent? Assisted? Memory Care? Board & Care?

Presenter: Sue Gibson, MBA CSA Certified Senior Advisor

April 2023 - Strength and Balance Techniques for Fall Prevention and Healthy Aging Demonstration and Group Participation!

Presenter: Michelle Zulim-Clark, M.S. Kinesiology, Health Education Specialist II

May 2023 - Caring for a Person with Dementia Presentation and Mini-Training

Presenter: Laura DeLoye, Program & Education Manager Alzheimer's Association SLO

June 2023 – Brainstorm Session for 2023-2024 Hot Topics, Needs, Issues Facing Seniors

Presenters: Maryanne Zarycka and Anita Shower, Co-Chairs

Goal 2: Advocate for Seniors on those critical issues with the Board of Supervisors, private and local government sectors, and through partnerships with service organizations as well as in the community:

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COA Annual Brainstorming Session June 2023

The Annual Brainstorming session in June 2023 was well attended, and the enthusiasm and participation of all involved was unsurpassed! It was a huge success! Approximately 50 Agency and community members filled the meeting room and after ground rules were explained and instructions provided, the session began.

Participants shouted out ideas and we quickly wrote them on whiteboards and then, as a united group, we organized the data and created nine main areas of needs and concerns for our Seniors. We then spent the second half of the session creating sub-topics under each area of concern on which to focus our 2023-2024 attention, presentations, and communications to the County Supervisors, other Agencies, and community Senior advocates.

Listed below are the critical issues, concerns, and needs for our county's Seniors as expressed by approximately 50 members, guests, multiple agency attendees, and community members who attended and participated in our brainstorming event. The list is ranked in order of importance based on the groups' scoring (#3a and #3b tied):

#1 Housing - Affordable

1. Advocate for Assisted Living Waiver Program to be establish in San Luis Obispo County (currently in 16 other CA counties)
2. Request more Senior-friendly and safe shelters for Senior evictions, homeless, and disaster victims.
3. Increase the matching efforts and advertising for Home share programs.
4. Investigate possibilities for Government incentives/assistance for countywide builders to build Senior-friendly homes:
 - a. Smaller homes, single story
 - b. ADA and elder safety features (grab bars/railings/ramps...)
 - c. Age-friendly neighborhoods (safe/secure/community areas)

#2 Care Management and Support

1. Provide low/no cost – respite care and support groups for family Caregivers.
2. Provide free resources countywide to assist Seniors in navigating all technology-based systems for medical, safety, wellness, support, and entertainment.
3. Provide incentives to encourage more volunteer mentors for aging Veterans to provide companionship, and help Veterans navigate the benefits and healthcare process so they can receive much needed help.
4. Develop Senior centralized care coordination systems and locations countywide – one-stop – with volunteer case manager/peer support.

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5. Initiate/develop County or Statewide networked drug/medication interaction warning system/software at pharmacy level. Specialized data to red flag drug interactions conflicts.

#3a Socialization

1. Add more Adult Day Care Centers (dementia support) throughout the county.
2. Increase recruiting efforts and provide incentives for more Senior-friendly Volunteers countywide!
3. Provide free/low-cost Senior-friendly companionship for early-stage dementia Seniors, aging Veterans, isolated, and homebound Seniors.
4. Provide free Senior shuttles for transportation to and from events, fun day trips, Senior fitness centers/programs, and Senior centers.
5. Create countywide teams and education for Senior suicide recognition indicators, loneliness, intervention and long term prevention.

#3b Education to Easily Navigate Resources (including Analog access)

1. Build/create/install Senior-friendly dedicated, accessible (including analog) resource centers/stations/kiosks throughout the county to find resources for:
 - a. Mental Health and first aid
 - b. Dementia ongoing education resources and support
 - c. Financial assistance
 - d. Scams prevention and recovery
2. Provide frequent and countywide Senior accessible End-of-life preparation information and assistance – POLST, Advance Directive, POA, care resources, fiduciary, Trust and Will information.
3. Provide a TV station for Analog Senior-friendly TV Network for entertainment, information, exercise, activities, music, storytelling, connecting with community functions/activities.
4. Advocates – eyes, ears, and voice for Seniors! To help navigate Health system, transportation, paperwork, signing up for services and utilities, travel, etc.

#4 Transportation/Public Access

1. Provide accessible, countywide, affordable, low/no cost, dedicated Senior-friendly/only shuttles with routes making regular daily scheduled rounds to markets, Senior centers, medical complexes, fitness facilities, pharmacies, salons... hop-on-hop-off (well, maybe not hop).
2. Provide easy access to Rural areas for Seniors living out of town countywide.
3. Provide door-to-door pick-up/drop-off with assist for impaired (mobile, sight, hearing, other)

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4. Provide Critical Senior-friendly and Dementia care training for all transportation workers, drivers, dispatch, and improved language access

#5 Health and Wellness

1. Provide frequent countywide Senior suicide prevention and ongoing at-risk identifiers and how to help.
2. Provide better/more/reliable back-up systems for medical equipment at home (and in assisted living facilities)
3. Provide free/low-cost Senior-friendly exercise, yoga, walking buddies, meditation, accessible music intervention programs, classes, techniques, and prayer groups.
4. Continue to support countywide injury prevention education - falls, violence, traffic safety - utilizing short classes at all Senior venues, assisted living facilities, retirement communities, Senior centers, fitness venues.
5. Provide Nutrition education, information and assistance for Seniors including shopping, preparing, and teaching healthy eating habits at all Senior venues, assisted living facilities, retirement communities, Senior centers, fitness venues.
6. Provide free/low-cost/voucher Mobile hygiene services for:
 - a. Dental cleaning
 - b. Podiatrist
 - c. Haircuts/manicures
 - d. Showers
 - e. Medication prep management (fill pill boxes)
7. Educate Seniors and heighten awareness of alternative holistic solutions; massage, acupuncture, nutrition, topical natural remedies, essential oils, cannabis, whirlpools and circulation stimulation, walking and exercises.
8. Educate and provide free training classes countywide for Senior Self-defense and violation/abuse training options and protocol.

#6 Medical Support

1. Establish additional specialized geriatric doctors, nurses, physician assistants, whole-person care programs,
2. Demand/advocate for more dementia and Senior care education for EMS and medical support staff, hospitals, clinics, assisted living facilities, in-home care, IHSS support, APS field workers.
3. Need more field workers to assist with Medication management, focusing on dosage, interactions, Senior substance abuse/misuse, awareness, identification, intervention, and reporting.
4. Improve medical and mental health education in homeless shelters.

#7 Legal Advocacy – Awareness and Assistance

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1. Scam prevention and recovery
2. Trust, Wills, DPOA, Fiduciary
3. Landlord/tenant disputes/guidelines
4. Public guardian system

#8 County/Agency Support Requests

1. Dedicated agency for hoarding assistance – multiple agencies touched but no specialized agency accountability.
2. Provide analog and improved navigation options for non-digital Seniors, and hearing and vision impairment.
3. Vouchers for food, hygiene care, showers, housing
4. Financial support for scam recovery and eliminating personal threats (repeats)
5. Improved inter-agency communication.
6. Agency accountability and responsibility – ‘no passing the buck.’

The Commission will continue to advocate for and educate Seniors during the new fiscal year, confident of the continued support of the members of the Board of Supervisors. We thank you for your support.

Most sincerely,

Maryanne Zarycka

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SLOCOA Co-Chair

Anita Shower

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