

## **Commonwealth Council on Aging 2006 Best Practices Award Winners**

### Community Partnerships Category

The **Central Virginia Task Force on Older Battered Women** sponsored by the Virginia Center on Aging at VCU, Richmond, VA

The Central Virginia Task Force on Older Battered Women is an interagency partnership responding to the needs of middle-aged and older women in the community who are victims of domestic, sexual, or family violence. The needs of these women are often hidden and unrecognized resulting in available resources being targeted and oriented to younger female victims with children. Formed in 1998, the Task Force has promoted resource sharing and collaboration among community agencies and organizations to raise awareness, advocate for services, and provide cross-training opportunities among organizations focusing on domestic violence and adult abuse issues. The Task Force's impact has been a more coordinated and trained system of responders to these issues. Since 2003, more than 729 local professionals and volunteers have been cross-trained including sexual assault program staff, area agency on aging staff, adult protective services workers, law enforcement officers, health care professionals (including emergency room nurses), and SALT Council and TRIAD program participants. For more information contact Dr. Paula Kupstas, Virginia Center on Aging, 804-828-1525.

### Education Category

The **Caregivers Community Network** sponsored by James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Caregivers for frail elders and persons with dementias experience a great deal of stress and there is documented need for affordable in-home services to support the caregiver's efforts. The Caregivers Community Network (CNN) is a unique campus-community partnership program offering coordinated support for families who live with and care for frail elders in a four-county area. CNN recruits and trains community volunteers and students from within the health care and human services academic programs at James Madison University to provide respite services. Additionally, CNN is developing a unique "Growing Volunteers" program that pairs youth volunteers between the ages of 7 and 17 with an adult to serve during holidays and summer breaks when fewer student volunteers are available. CNN staff visits each family requesting services to carefully match needs with volunteer capabilities and provide follow-up support. This model creates intergenerational relationships while enhancing learning and establishing community connections for students in health and human services fields. For more information contact Emily Akerson, JMU Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services at 540-568-6120.

### Healthy Aging (Physical) Category

The program to **Increase Physical Activity for Rural Older Adults in Southwest Virginia** sponsored by Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Big Stone Gap, VA

The program to increase physical activity for rural older adults (Physical Activity Project) is an award winning, evidence based program aimed at improving health and quality of life for older persons in targeted southwest Virginia communities. Older adults in the far southwestern portion of the Commonwealth do not have access to YMCA's and other types of fitness facilities that offer structured physical activity programs for older persons. The Physical Activity Project integrates a daily regime of low-impact exercises into the structure of the Area Agency on Aging's community congregate nutrition sites. This makes the program accessible for elders who would not otherwise have transportation or the ability to afford a structured exercise program. The Project makes exercise fun with lively music, colorful t-shirts, team nicknames, and other incentives that help generate enthusiasm and maintain motivation. For more information contact Nancy Smith, Mountain Empire for Older Citizens at 276-523-4202.

#### Healthy Aging (Mental) Category

The **Arlington County Senior Adult Mental Health Program** sponsored by the Arlington County Department of Human Services, Arlington, VA

In general, older persons with mental illnesses lack access to services that are age appropriate and provided by workers who are knowledgeable of geriatric mental health issues. The Arlington County Senior Mental health Program serves residents age 65 and older who have mental illness. It is designed to promote or enhance independent living through the stabilization of their illness. The program uses a multidisciplinary team approach to mental health treatment that includes a comprehensive assessment, medication services, psychotherapy, case coordination, outreach and consultation. Services are provided in the home for those older persons who are unable or unwilling to come into a community mental health center. For more information contact Henriette Kellum, Senior Adult Mental Health Program at 703-228-1753.

#### Healthy Aging (Wellness) Category

The **Healing Zone Project** sponsored by SeniorConnections: The Capital Area Agency on Aging, Richmond, VA

The Healing Zone Project is a community action, advocacy, and training program that promotes healthy ageing among the African American population. The project is a cooperative effort between the local Area Agency on Aging and churches in the African American community to raise awareness about healthy aging strategies and ultimately improve the quality of life for Black elders. The project uses a "train the trainer" approach to energize seniors to adopt healthy aging practices while also encouraging them to become politically active. It provides information through the use of "healing circles" that meet in local churches. For more information contact Harris Spindle, SeniorConnections: The Capital Area Agency on Aging at 804-343-3037.

#### Housing Category

**Reusable Home Access Ramps** sponsored by District Three Senior Services, Marion, VA

Many frail or disabled elders who must use a wheelchair find that their homes are no longer accessible. The Reusable Home Access Ramp project provides an

innovative, low-cost alternative for wheel-chair dependent elders to maintain their mobility and independence while living safely in their own homes. Most wooden access ramps are not constructed to be reused....certainly not constructed to be moved across the county for use at another home. This project designs ramps that can be disassembled into 16 foot sections, loaded on a truck, and transported to another site. The design does not require the support posts to be cemented in place so they can be easily removed once the ramp is disassembled. The homeowner who receives one of these ramps signs an agreement to donate the ramp back to the project once it is no longer needed. Over 250 ramps have been installed during the last two years and many have also been disassembled and moved to new locations once they were no longer needed at their original location. For more information contact Glenn Booker, District Three Senior Services at 276-783-8157.

#### Long-Term Care Category

The **Humanitarian Visitor Program** sponsored by the Citizen's Committee to Protect the Elderly, Virginia Beach, VA

The private nonprofit Citizens Committee to Protect the Elderly sponsors the Humanitarian Visitor Program in a seven-city area of Tidewater. The program recruits and trains more than 600 volunteers who are matched with at-risk elders who are in a facility (both nursing homes and Assisted Living Facilities) or in their own homes. The volunteers visit at least once a week for a minimum of one hour. They provide companionship, socialization, and become an advocate for the persons they visit. This relationship improves the quality of life for the elder and offers a wonderful humanitarian role for the volunteer. For more information contact Judith S. Allison, Director, The Citizens Committee to Protect the Elderly at 757-518-8500.

#### Senior Safety Category

The **Financial Exploitation Action Team** sponsored by a community partnership in Virginia Beach, VA

This grassroots public awareness and training project is a collaborative effort involving the Virginia Beach Office of Consumer Affairs, local AARP/TRIAD, the Office of the Attorney General, the State Police, FBI, the Virginia Bank Security Association of Tidewater, the Virginia Bankers Association, Old Dominion University, the local department of social services, local law enforcement agencies, the Citizens Committee to Protect the Elderly, and the local office of the Social Security Administration. Formed in 1998, the Team's goal is to offer training to financial institutions and their employees as a first line of defense against the financial exploitation of the elderly. The training helps bank employees recognize and report suspected exploitation. The Team also provides training and information directly to elders to help them avoid becoming the victims of frauds, scams, or financial exploitation. For more information contact Betty Bowden at 757-460-3481.

#### Transportation Category

**Four County Transit** sponsored by the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens in Cedar Bluff, VA.

Four County Transit is a fully coordinated public transportation system serving a rural four-county region. The level of coordination achieved by Four County Transit and its partners provides low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the frail elderly with access to health care, jobs, education, and social networks. Four County Transit demonstrates that the deployment of technology to transportation services can increase mobility and create a more seamless, effective, and efficient transportation system without new revenues. The technology includes the Transportation Resources and Coordinated Information (TRACI) computer program that provides advanced route scheduling capabilities, automated billing, automated reporting, a maintenance monitoring tool for vehicles, and management reports to track ridership and plan for future needs. TRACI also allows the organization to track clients from multiple agencies and funding sources. For more information contact Leon Alder, Four County Transit at 276-963-1486.