



FLIP THE SCRIPT ON AGING: MAY 2025

Gray Matters



Can you find all the eggs?

Join Us for the 2025 Elder Rights Summit June 11th & 12th!

BY ANDREA BRUHNKE, LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN MANAGER

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program of A1AA announces the **2025 Elder Rights Summit on June 11-12**. Formerly the Elder Abuse Awareness Conference, this event honors **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** and will bring together local and statewide partners working to protect the rights of older adults in our community.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, including our Diamond Sponsor, Senior Medicare Patrol, **we are able to offer this event at no cost!** The summit will span two days, offering valuable discussions and networking opportunities.

Tuesday, June 11th: Experts in advocacy, elder abuse response, and protection will provide panel discussions and breakout sessions. Speakers:

- Tony Chicotel, Staff Attorney at the California Association for Nursing Home Reform.
- A panel on elder abuse response and protection: District Attorney Stacey Eads, Humboldt County Sheriff William Honsal, Public Guardian Kelli Schwartz, APS Supervisor Keri Schrock, and Deputy Attorney General Jeff Darnell from the California Department of Justice's Division of Medical Fraud and Elder Abuse.
- Donata Bohanec, Executive Director of the California Elder Justice Coalition.
- Laura Woods, elder advocate for the Yurok Tribe.

- Anjali Browning, Arcata House Partnership.
- Mary Keehn, Founder of We Are Up.

On **Wednesday, June 12th:** Experts in aging policy, legal rights, and community support services:

- Identifying and Preventing Elder Abuse & Legal Remedies with Jenny Anders-Gable & Amy Hunt, Legal Services of Northern California.
- Planning for the Future: Health and Estate Planning to Protect Oneself and Family with Jenny Anders-Gable & Amy Hunt, Legal Services of Northern California.
- Advance Healthcare Directives: Making Informed Decisions from Hospice of Humboldt.



Newsletter Highlights

JOIN US FOR THE 2025
ELDER RIGHTS SUMMIT
JUNE 11TH & 12TH!

VOLUNTEER
SPOTLIGHT

PLANNING AHEAD:
HOW TO PREPARE FOR
FUTURE HEALTH
NEEDS

A1AA HOLDS PUBLIC
HEARING ON
PROPOSED SERVICES

OLDER AMERICANS
MONTH 2025 THEME:
FLIP THE SCRIPT ON
AGING

Area 1 Agency on Aging opposes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' plan to dismantle the Administration for Community Living (ACL). ACL is the only federal agency dedicated to supporting community living for older adults and people with disabilities. Its programs—nutrition, caregiver support, transportation, and legal aid—are essential. Dispersing these services across multiple agencies will cause fragmentation, reduced accountability, and harm to millions. This restructuring undermines independence, safety, and quality of life for those who rely on these critical resources.



A Big THANK YOU to All of Our Wonderful Volunteers!

Volunteer Driver Program

- Donald Bicknell
- Barbara Bradburn
- David Cliff
- Tamar Danufsky
- Roxanne Haatvedt
- Susan Halpin
- Linda Hamm
- Richard Knapp
- Bob Kornmann
- Ken Marrow
- Nancy Pratt
- Gary Ross
- Suzanne Scott
- Vicki Silkiss
- Cheryl Slightom
- Frances Tjarnstrom
- Gail Ulrich
- Heather Walt

Senior Planet

- Lindy Lentz
- John Schmidt
- Tom Silva
- Cheryl Slightom
- Frances Tjarnstrom
- Gail Ulrich

Northcoast Homeshare

- Su Sneddon



SAIL

- Burl Berlager
- Gaylene Dudal
- Monica Fernandez
- Nancy Frost
- Beth Niemeyer
- Greg Aslanian
- Levi Basist

HICAP

- Janine Randall
- Johnna Townsend
- Penny Eckert
- Marla Joy
- Marilyn Foote
- Elizabeth Gonzalves
- Susan Kozak
- Joyce Stigter

Long-Term Care Ombudsman

- Sue Alton
- Steve Engle
- Marcy Hunt
- Harry Kavich
- Colin Reid
- Linda Ribordy
- Barbara Walser

Board of Directors

- Nick Vogel
- Jamie Jensen
- Kim Perris
- Tom Hjerpe
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- Miyiosha Aubrey
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- Valerie Starkey
- Tasha Romo
- Steve Madrone
- Nancy Powers-Stone
- Dave Zuber
- Lisa Leon

Administrative Support:

- Audrey Acorn

Interested in becoming a volunteer?

[Click here for more information!](#)

Benefits of Volunteering



A recent [study](#) reports that volunteering reduces the risk of depression by 43 percent among older adults. The study suggests that volunteerism may be particularly important for older adults who have recently retired. Experiencing significant life changes like retirement, which is often accompanied by a loss of social networks, can contribute to depressive symptoms. Benefits found in volunteering may help mitigate the effects of potential risks associated with retirement, such as a loss of purpose, personal value and meaning. Serving others through volunteerism may have a protective effect.

To recognize National Volunteer Appreciation Month, we also offer these stories.

- [‘Keeps Me Grateful’: How Volunteering Can Help Older Adults](#) (The Guardian, January 6, 2025)
- [When Kindness Becomes a Habit, It Improves Our Health](#) (NPR, December 25, 2024)
- [Volunteering Reduces Rate of Aging, Study Finds](#) (WashU, December 10, 2024)

(from National Community Care Corps Update, January-February 2025)



Penny Eckert, Volunteer HICAP Counselor

Volunteer Spotlight: Penny Eckert

I'm Penny Eckert, 72, semi-retired, working for the Karuk Tribe and for a tiny mutual water company, volunteer EMT for local fire department, and a very proud (certified) volunteer Medicare counselor with HICAP. I don't just like being a counselor. I love it! It gives me a sense of purpose and an opportunity to put a lifetime of successfully navigating bureaucratic hurdles to use for my neighbors. With my excellent and ongoing HICAP training, I can help folks through the complications and challenges of all aspects of Medicare, including assisting with signing up for Medi-Cal and understanding how Medicare and Indian Health Service work together out here in remote rural Humboldt County, on and off reservations.

I jumped at the chance to train as a volunteer back in late 2018, when, after a productive HICAP counseling session helped solve a dual eligibility problem for a neighbor friend of mine whom I accompanied, Robert (a HICAP counselor) suggested I might want to consider volunteering. I did!

I was particularly interested in volunteering because we'd had to drive two hours from our respective homes in the Orleans area to Arcata to see a counselor. I thought maybe I could serve the remote outback of northeast Humboldt—Orleans, Weitchpec, Hoopa, and Willow Creek. I had worked only a few months with all in-person sessions when COVID forced us to telephone sessions. Though my focus is NE Humboldt with two in-person sites, I also serve Humboldt and Del Norte counties by phone. Complex cases are my fave!

David Cliff

BY MAGGIE KRAFT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

David Cliff, one of our longest-serving volunteers in the Volunteer Driver Program (VDP), has made a lasting impact since he began volunteering with A1AA in 2014. David moved to Humboldt County after years of visiting friends and quickly became familiar with the area through his volunteer work. Although his initial decision to volunteer was practical—helping him get to know the county—David soon found meeting people by providing rides was fun.

David has provided 904 rides, covering an impressive 17,836 miles, roughly 72% of the way around the world. We joke that David won't stop until he's reached 100% around the world so he can park at his own house. Despite the challenges of rural navigation and the initially confusing similarities of street names (Harris, Harrison, and Henderson), he continues to enjoy the flexibility volunteering offers and values the mileage reimbursement, making it a sustainable commitment.



David Cliff, Volunteer Driver

He drives many older adults facing medical and other challenges, offering more than just a ride. His compassionate listening and presence have helped combat isolation, allowing riders to share their stories and feel supported. David's dedication, compassion, and understanding of the struggles older adults face in the healthcare system make him an irreplaceable part of the VDP. We are proud to honor him for his exceptional service. Thank you, David!

Mishell Lopez

BY SUSAN CLEVERDON, DIRECTOR OF AGENCY PROGRAMS

Each year, one in four older adults falls, making falls the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries in this group. While most falls can be prevented, rural areas like Humboldt and Del Norte Counties face greater challenges due to limited access to medical and in-home care. A1AA is committed to reducing fall risks so older adults can age safely at home.

In 2022, Dr. Justus Ortega, PhD from Cal Poly Humboldt and Mishell Lopez, MS conducted the North Coast Fall Prevention Survey to assess fall risks among older adults in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Of 762 participants, over half were at risk of falling, yet fewer than 17% had received a fall risk assessment by their medical provider in the past year. Additionally, 74.4% of Humboldt and 78.5% of Del Norte participants reported a fear of falling.

A1AA collaborates with Ms. Lopez, now pursuing her doctorate in Physical Therapy at USC, as she partners with rural Family Resource Centers to bring fall prevention education and resources to older adults. She also works with Cal Poly Humboldt's Biomechanics Lab to provide fall risk assessment equipment to remote areas, testing lower body strength, flexibility, mobility, and balance. Additionally, she is developing a Fall Prevention Home Toolkit to help agencies conduct home assessments and provide practical resources, empowering older adults to make safer home and lifestyle choices to reduce the risk of falls.

Ms. Lopez has visited Rio Dell, Loleta, and Mattole and will present in Willow Creek and Redway in April. She'll return to Mattole with Biomechanics Lab members to offer fall risk assessments to older adults in the community. These insights will help A1AA tailor support to each community. A1AA deeply thanks Ms. Lopez for her dedication, which has strengthened partnerships with Cal Poly Humboldt and rural Family Resource Centers, while enhancing awareness of fall prevention resources in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Mishell will be wrapping up her time with A1AA at the end of April to focus on pursuing her doctorate. We wish her all the best in this exciting next chapter!

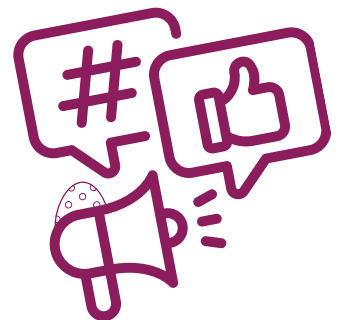
We have moved to a new Facebook Page!

Area 1 Agency on Aging has transitioned to a new Facebook Page, and we don't want you to miss a thing! To stay updated on our latest programs, services, and community events, please follow us at

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566601734464>

We appreciate your support and look forward to connecting with you on our new page!

Thank you for being a part of our community!



Planning Ahead: How to Prepare for Future Health Needs

PART 1 OF 3



It's not a secret that our health changes throughout our lives. As our health changes, so do our healthcare needs. Whether you're anticipating the natural effects of aging, managing a chronic condition, or simply wanting to stay prepared for the future, it is important to plan.

Being proactive about your future health needs can help you maintain independence, reduce stress, and make sure your wishes are respected.

The first step in planning for your future health is to assess your current health. Are you currently managing a chronic condition, such as diabetes or high blood pressure? Are there any hereditary conditions in your family that may become a concern later in your life? Keep your health record up to date and identify potential risks early.

Preventive Care:

If you are a Medicare beneficiary, Medicare Preventive Care helps you prepare for future health needs by preventing illness, detecting medical conditions, and keeps you healthy

A service is considered preventive if have no prior symptoms of a disease. In contrast, diagnostic services address symptoms or conditions that you already have.

Medicare Part B covers a Welcome to Medicare and Annual Wellness visits with zero cost-sharing if you see the appropriate providers. Medicare Part B also covers many other preventive services, such as screenings, vaccines, and counseling.

To find out if Medicare covers your test, service, or item you can visit

www.medicare.gov, or make an appointment with Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) by calling (707) 444-3000 or (800) 434-0222, or emailing us at hicap@a1aa.org.



HEALTH RECORDS SAFE KEEPING IDEAS:

If you keep your records digitally, use secure encrypted platforms.

For any online health record, use the two-factor authentication to add an extra layer of security. For paper health records, create a dedicated folder to store all your medical documents, consider using a personal binder with label sections (e.g., labs, doctor visits, prescriptions, etc.)

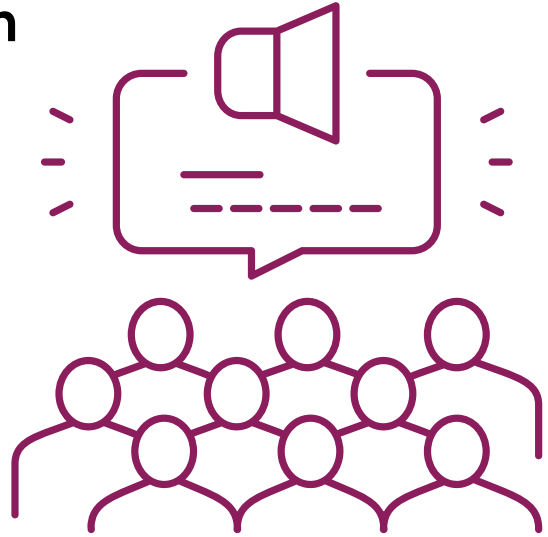
- Key components of a health record:
- Personal Information
- Medical History
- Medications
- Diagnoses and Treatments
- Lab results and Imaging Reports
- Vaccinations
- Progress Notes

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A1AA Holds Public Hearing on Proposed Services

BY MAREN ROSE, PLANNER

The annual Area Plan public hearing was held at Healy Senior Center on March 20th in Redway, CA. The hearing included a presentation on the Older Americans Act, the role of the area agency on aging, and proposed services for FY 2025-26 year. Approximately twenty-five participants engaged in discussion about the proposed services and needs of older adults residing in the Southern Humboldt Community. Some of the topics discussed centered around lack of housing, need for volunteers in the area to assist in transportation for older adults who are unable to drive, and concern about Medi-Cal and other potential social safety net program funding cuts. There was interest in locating a volunteer to develop the Staying Active and Independent for a Lifetime (SAIL) exercise program in Southern Humboldt.



Comments received are included in the 25-26 Area Plan Update which is submitted for approval to the California Department of Aging. Anyone interested in learning about proposed services can contact Maren Rose at (707) 498-8461 or by email at mrose@a1aa.org. Written comments may be submitted by **April 11th** to be included in the 25-26 Area Plan Update. To access the 2024-28 Area Plan: <https://a1aa.org/area-plan-and-updates/>



We Appreciate our Donors! Many thanks to all of you who donated to our agency in 2024. Your generosity helped match the Board of Directors' pledge of \$10,000. This money will help fill the gaps in government funding. Please consider making a one time donation, or a monthly pledge, through our website www.a1aa.org. It's easy and it makes a BIG difference. Thank you!



Planned Giving: Required Minimum Distributions

If you are drawing down from a retirement account, you can contribute the RMD, required minimum distribution, directly to Area 1 Agency on Aging and receive a tax break whether or not you itemize. We can also accept stock transfers.



Staying Active and Independent with SAIL

Our SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) program is making a real difference in the lives of participants by preventing falls and improving balance. One dedicated participant recently shared that she appreciates the virtual option to attend as she is homebound, or another who was walking her two dogs and they pulled her off her footing and she felt that if she hadn't had taken SAIL, she may not have been able to catch herself and prevent the fall.



Overall, so many participants share that after attending SAIL classes consistently they found they are able to walk without their cane, get up from a seated position with ease and could join local walking groups. These are just a few examples of the feedback we receive about the SAIL program. It continues to be a valuable resource for maintaining strength, balance, and confidence for many in our community.

CalFresh Healthy Living

Through CalFresh Healthy Living, our FoodSmarts classes have been instrumental in increasing confidence and lowering barriers to nutrition. Participants have gained practical knowledge about:

- Making healthy smoothies
- Utilizing all the fresh produce they receive from Food for People boxes, including less familiar items like delicata squash
- Cooking for one
- Meal planning
- Maximizing their food budgets



These classes have been valuable for residents at Silvercrest, where many received fresh produce but were unsure how to prepare it. The guidance provided has helped them embrace healthier eating habits with confidence.

CalFresh Outreach

Navigating the CalFresh application process can be overwhelming, but having someone who can help throughout the process is essential for those in need. Many individuals have expressed deep appreciation for the hands-on support we provide. Having someone to guide them step by step has made what can be a daunting task much more manageable.

Older Americans Month 2025 Theme: Flip the Script on Aging

Every May, ACL leads the nation's observance of Older Americans Month (OAM), a time to recognize older Americans' contributions, highlight aging trends, and reaffirm our commitment to serving older adults.



The 2025 theme, *Flip the Script on Aging*, focuses on transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and dispel misconceptions. This year, join us in honoring older adults' contributions, exploring the many opportunities for staying active and engaged as we age, and highlighting the opportunities for purpose, exploration, and connection that come with aging.

Changing the Narrative, One Birthday at a Time!

In 2020, Changing the Narrative launched an anti-ageist birthday card campaign, calling for artists to design cards that countered the usual, depressing narrative about getting older. The resulting designs defy negative views and celebrate the joys of aging.

The campaign has been more successful than we hoped, with coverage in many popular podcasts and media outlets including **The Denver Post** and **CNN**. The Greeting Card Association also invited us to deliver the **keynote address** at the 2021 Noted Expo.

In January 2023, a new round of cards was released, each from a professional greeting card designer.



[See the 2023 Cards](#)



Heads Up! Impact Report for FY 23-24

Keep an eye on your inbox for our impact report for FY 2023-2024, highlighting the services and supports A1AA has provided to older adults and partners in our community. Coming later this month!

Upcoming Events

WE'LL SEE YOU THERE !

April 2025

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month

04/15

A1AA Board of Directors Meeting

2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Check the website events calendar for details!

04/16

Fall Prevention Presentation

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Healy Senior Center

04/16

Fall Prevention Presentation

11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Willow Creek Community Resource Center

04/23

Balance, Mobility, and Fall Risk Assessments

11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Mattole Valley Resource Center

04/23

Yurok Tribe 2nd Annual Elder Summit

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Klamath

May 2025

May is Older Americans Month

05/20

A1AA Board of Directors Meeting

2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Check the website events calendar for details!

05/23

Ombudsman Presentation

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Crescent City Chamber

05/26

Memorial Day

The office will be closed.

June 2025

06/06

Cancer Support Services Fair

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

2700 Dolbeer St

Eureka

06/11

2025 Elder Rights Summit Day 1

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Sequoia Conference Center

Eureka

06/12

2025 Elder Rights Summit Day 2

8:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Sequoia Conference Center

Eureka

06/17

A1AA Board of Directors Meeting

2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Check the website events calendar for details!

The information provided here was a result of and funded by a contract with the California Department of Aging.