



Gray Matters



Older Americans Act Turns 60, A1AA Celebrates its 45th Anniversary

The Older Americans Act (OAA) was created in 1965. Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were formally established in the 1973 OAA reauthorization as the "on-the-ground" organizations charged with helping vulnerable older adults live with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. ([Learn more about the role of AAAs.](#)) Title VI, Grants for Indian Tribal Organizations, was included in the 1978 Amendments to the OAA. Title VI Native American Aging Programs provide nutrition, supportive and caregiver services to older American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians.

A Message from Sandi Fitzpatrick, Former Executive Director



PATTY BERG AND SANDI FITZPATRICK

In 1985 I was hired by Patty Berg, founding Director of the A1AA, to serve as the planner and contracts manager. The Agency was still in its infancy at that time and it was all so "new and exciting". Upon Patty's retirement in 1999 I became the Executive Director. When I think back on my tenure at A1AA I am reminded that these years were a time of creativity and community-wide program expansion. Ah, the Info Van!

A few of A1AA standouts: launched a multi-faceted caregiver support initiative; created advocacy and outreach programs, and received a \$1.7 million dollar bequest.

What I do remember, with much admiration, is the commitment, enthusiasm and integrity of all those who chose to work, on behalf of older adults, at A1AA.

I left the A1AA in 2004 to lead the California Commission on Aging until my retirement in 2018. Now, I spend my time at the UC Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Loomis.

1980 - 81

Designation of California's 33 Area Agencies on Aging; A1AA incorporated to serve Humboldt and Del Norte; Patty Berg selected as Executive Director.

1981 - 82

Entered into contracts with HSRC, Redwood Ombudsman, Redwood Legal Assistance, DNSC, and Inter Tribal Council of California.

1982 - 83

Contracted with HSU for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Hoopa Health Association (now K'ima:w Medical Center).

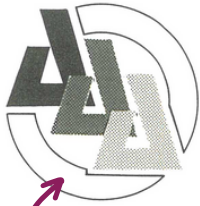
1983 - 84

Congregate meal site started in Fortuna; HSRC opened multipurpose senior center and started Adult Day Health Care Center in Humboldt County.

1984 - 85

A1AA became sponsor for RSVP.

Looking Back: Voices That Helped Shape Us



A1AA's first logo!

1985 - 86

First nutrition contract with Del Norte negotiated; A1AA administered Senior Center Bond Act; awarded to HSRC, DNSC, and Southern Humboldt Senior Center (now Healy).

1986 - 87

Developed North Coast Senior Citizens Foundation; Chaired Elder Abuse Prevention task forces in each county.

1987 - 88

Created a centralized senior information and referral system.

1988 - 89

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program funded.

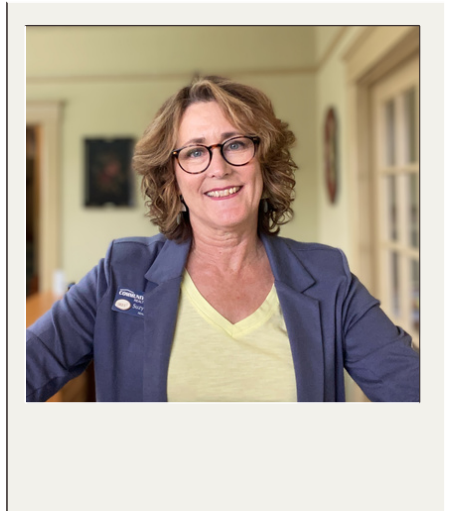
1989 - 90

A1AA created Redwoods Medicare Assignment Project with the Humboldt/Del Norte Medical Society.

What I remember most? The people. I was lucky to work alongside some truly amazing coworkers, Board members, and Advisory Council folks. We laughed, we problem-solved, we rolled up our sleeves when things got tricky—and we always kept older adults at the center of everything we did.

One of the highlights for me was diving into advocacy work. We spoke up, pushing for smarter policies, and making sure aging issues stayed on the radar where decisions were being made. That kind of work lit a fire in me.

What I really appreciate from my time at A1AA is the knowledge and skills I gained—they've been a strong foundation as I've taken the next step in my career as a Real Estate Broker and continue to serve the community in a new way.



SUZY SMITH, ASSISTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As A1AA looks ahead, my wish is that it keeps evolving, stays bold, and never forgets its mission: supporting older adults and helping families find their way. The world needs that kind of steady, caring leadership—and I know A1AA is up for it.



Suzi Smith and Sandi Fitzpatrick (2004)



Keep an eye out for our next newsletter for more stories from former staff.



1990 - 91

A1AA participated in development of Dixieland Jazz Festival.

1991 - 92

RSVP expanded to Del Norte County.

1992 - 93

Senior Information & Assistance became A1AA program; A1AA and FEMA worked together to assist older adults whose homes were damaged in the 1992 earthquakes.

1993 - 94

HCSO and A1AA initiated crime prevention and community policing activities.

1994 - 95

A1AA formed Volunteer Center of the Redwoods; R U Ok? Program started.



JULIE SESSA, PLANNER

I reflect with gratitude on my nearly two decades (1989-2008) with an organization that truly embodied support and growth. From the visionary leadership of founder Patty Berg to the compassionate guidance of Sandi Fitzpatrick, Area 1 Agency on Aging was more than just a workplace; it was a community.

I'll never forget the encouragement to bring my newborn to the office, a testament to the incredibly supportive environment that helped ease my transition back to work. This empathy extended to every aspect of our roles, fostering a workplace where employees felt valued and empowered to support seniors and senior services in our communities.

A1AA provided countless opportunities to expand my skills and take on new challenges. As a bookkeeper, the Agency converted from manual records to a computerized system, a significant leap forward. Later, as a Project Manager, I poured my energy into initiatives like STRONG (Strength Training Resources and Fall Prevention), directly benefiting seniors and serving as a model for other AAAs. As a Planner, I had the opportunity to work on legislative advocacy and efforts for improved walkability and transportation — always with the well-being of our senior community at the forefront.

My time at Area 1 Agency on Aging was profoundly rewarding, shaped by a shared commitment to enhancing the lives of seniors in our community. Happy 45th Anniversary to an organization that continues to make a meaningful difference!



Dottie Lee and Julie Sessa (2004)

Looking Back:



1995 - 96

First bi-county Senior Resource Directory produced by Redwood Ombudsman's Long-Term Care Committee; Del Norte Caregiver Registry for Seniors started.

1996 - 97

A1AA Endowment Fund established.

1997 - 98

HICAP became program of A1AA; A1AA began administration of new state-funded services: Alzheimer's support, respite, respite purchase of service, Brown Bag, and Linkages.

1998 - 99

Sandy Fitzpatrick selected as Executive Director.

1999 - 2000

California Osteoporosis Prevention & Education (COPE) Project started.

It was fate that in 2014 a keyword search for "aging" in the employment section led me to a part-time position as the "Volunteer Driver Program" Coordinator at the "Area 1 Agency on Aging (A1AA)." I had just received my bachelor's degree in Sociology at (now) CalPoly Humboldt. It was a pivotal time in my life. I looked back and reflected on my academic, professional, and life experiences so far and with the insight from my spouse I decided to pursue working with older adults.



DAN BIRMINGHAM, PROGRAM MANAGER

I was honored and overjoyed by the opportunity and soon found that pro-aging social advocacy was a passion and that challenging all forms of ageism was more than a career decision, it was my new way of life, and it felt right. Later I became the Information & Assistance (I&A) Program Manager and Data Manager for the Older Americans Act programs at A1AA.

In addition to this work, my most important accomplishments were early involvement in what are now known as the "Redwood Coast Village" and the A1AA "Northcoast Homeshare" program. During these years, I also celebrated my 30th birthday, welcomed my first two children into the world, purchased my first home, and earned a Master of Social Work with a concentration in Gerontology degree from CSU Chico. The staff, culture, and community supported me and my family through it all.

I am now the Older Americans Act (OAA) Data Manager Specialist at the California Department of Aging and manage the data collection and reporting requirements for all 33 Area Agencies on Aging in the state. I thank A1AA for teaching me that "age is more than just a number" and that every one of us in every stage and age of our lives deserves to live with dignity, safety, and choice. A mantra that I now herald every chance I get is "Aging is Living!" Happy 45th Anniversary Area 1 Agency on Aging!



Dan Birmingham and Maggie Kraft



Federal Budget Update

Here's what we know:

2000 - 01

Healy Senior Center and Legal Services of Northern California become contractors of A1AA; Bequest of \$1.7 million made to A1AA by Czerweinic; Caregiver Support Project created with \$650,000 grant.

Our core federal funding remains stable for now, although we always see reductions to our federal funds since our award is tied to population-based funding formulas; our 25-26 allocations are less than last year.

2001 - 02

Chore/home modification project started; Nat'l family caregiver funds received; COPE renamed to STRING task force; Volunteer Center Endowment Fund and Service & Volunteer Fund Established.

Much of our state support comes from California's general fund, which is more vulnerable in tight budget years. While we have not been notified of cuts, the state will be looking at their budget in the wake of the federal one.

2002 - 03

Consolidation of caregiver and information services; Secured Humboldt County contract to provide IHSS registry services.



Join advocate and author **Anna Zivarts** for "**When Driving Is Not an Option**" on Thursday, **July 17th at 7 PM** at **Arcata's D Street Neighborhood Center**.

2003 - 04

3 year ADRC grant received; Funded caregiver training at College of the Redwoods Del Norte campus.

Learn why accessible, inclusive transportation matters and how communities can better support non-drivers.

2004 - 05

Donna Chamber selected as Executive Director.

Contact: colin@transportationpriorities.org for details.

WHEN DRIVING IS NOT AN OPTION

A Free Public Talk with
National Advocate & Author
Anna Zivarts

THURSDAY
JULY 17TH

STARTS 7:00 PM
AT ARCATA'S D STREET
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

A discussion on the non-drivers in every community, the importance of meeting the transportation needs of non-drivers, how communities can work better for non-drivers (and everyone else), and valuing the expertise of nondrivers.

FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT:
COLIN FISKE
COLIN@TRANSPORTATIONPRIORITIES.ORG



Supporting Independence at Home: Homemaker Services at A1AA

2005 - 06

Disaster Preparedness Kits for Caregivers, Day of Caring event to help older adults with yard work; caregiver resource fairs held.

2006 - 07

Del Norte InfoCenter relocated to the Wellness Center.

2007 - 08

Cindy Denbo selected as Executive Director.

2008 - 09

Start of weekly KIEM Live at Five Senior and Boomers information segment.

2009 - 10

Celebrated consolidation of services, programs, and offices at 434 7th St in Eureka; Volunteer Driver Program launched for Eel River Valley residents.

Our Homemaker program empowers older adults and adults with disabilities to live safely and independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

Homemaker services are designed to help clients with day-to-day tasks that have become difficult due to age, disability, or health conditions. These services may include light housekeeping, laundry, meal clean-up, and other supportive tasks that contribute to a clean, comfortable, and safe living environment.

But our support goes beyond chores, we also focus on preventing falls, one of the leading causes of injury among older adults. As part of our homemaker services, trained staff conduct an in-home fall risk assessment. This assessment helps identify potential hazards and make practical recommendations to reduce the risk of falls and improve safety.

Home modifications may be available for clients who qualify to address identified risks. These can include grab bars in the bathroom, hand rails, improved lighting, non-slip flooring, and other adaptive solutions, all designed to reduce the risk of falls and support long-term independence.

If you or someone you know could benefit from Homemaker services or a fall risk assessment, please contact us to learn about eligibility and available support. We're here to help you or your loved one age safely and confidently in place.

Contact Us:

Taylor Willis, Aging-in-Place Specialist

Phone (707) 442-3763 Ext. 220

Email: twillis@a1aa.org



Stretch Your Food Budget with CalFresh!



2010 - 11

California Endowment funding started the Senior Action Coalition; Driver Program expands.

2011 - 12

Maggie Kraft selected as Executive Director; Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program becomes an A1AA service.

2012 - 13

A1AA received nutrition funding for two years to provide CalFresh assistance to seniors, meals at discharge from hospitals, and assistive devices for healthy food preparation and storage; A1AA hosted first annual "Be Here Now" for artists age 60+ to coincide with May Arts Alive.

2013 - 14

Worked with HSU Environmental Planning & Protection Program students to understand barriers to development of senior housing in northern Humboldt.

2014 - 15

A1AA started Gold Star Move Management; conducted survey that led to development of Redwood Coast Village.

Groceries are expensive—but CalFresh can help. CalFresh provides monthly food benefits to help you buy healthy groceries and eat better without breaking the bank.

Not sure if you qualify? We can help!

Applying is quick, confidential, and we provide support every step of the way.

Benefits are loaded onto an EBT card that works like a debit card at grocery stores and many farmers markets.

Don't leave food on the table. Call us today and start saving money!

In Humboldt County, call **707-442-3763**. Del Norte residents call **707-324-0623**

What are you waiting for?

Let Your Voice be Heard!

A1AA is seeking Del Norte residents 60 years and older who are interested in serving on the A1AA Advisory Council. The Advisory Council advises the A1AA Board of Directors on planning and policy to further the agency's mission in developing coordinated community-based services for older adults residing in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Primary functions include:

1. Representing the interests of older adults in Del Norte County.
2. Providing input in the development and administration of the Area Plan of services funded by the Older Americans Act.
3. Conducting annual public hearings to receive input on proposed services.
4. Reviewing and commenting on policies, programs and actions which affect older adults.

Council Meetings are held on Zoom on a quarterly basis. There is currently one opening for a representative from Del Norte County. Contact Maren Rose at (707) 498-8461 for more information or an application. To access the 2024-28 Area Plan: <https://a1aa.org/area-plan-and-updates/>



Planning Ahead: How to Prepare for Future Health Needs

It's not always easy to talk about future health concerns, but discussing your wishes with family members can prevent stress and confusion later. Take time to share your preferences for healthcare, medical interventions, and end-of-life care. Clearly communicate your preferences regarding treatment in the event of a major illness or injury. Discuss whether you'd prefer aggressive treatments or more comfort focused care if your health declines. Having these conversations early will help your loved ones respect your wishes and support you when you need it.



2015 - 16

Caregiving funds subcontracted to Redwood Caregiver Resource Center; STRONG program retired, SAIL program started.

2016 - 17

Redwood Coast Village becomes free-standing nonprofit.

2017 - 18

Volunteer Driver Program received Department of Transportation Grant; Northcoast Homeshare created from focus groups related to housing needs

2018 - 19

Board of Directors retires RSVP; A1AA hosted conference on hoarding disorder and began support groups.

2019 - 20

A1AA staff worked remotely and SAIL classes moved online in response to COVID-19; received additional funding to address pandemic needs; distributed thousands of shelf stable meals; provided cash and material aid to older adults with emergent needs.

Create Advanced Directives:

Advance directives, such as living wills and power of attorney for healthcare, are legal documents that contain your medical preferences in case you are unable to make decisions for yourself

Living will: specifies the types of medical care you want -or don't want- in situations where you are unable to communicate, such as being on life support or in a coma.

Power of attorney for healthcare: allows you to designate a trusted family member or friend as your healthcare representative, which means they can make healthcare decisions on your behalf.

Having Advance Directives in place guarantees that your health care wishes are followed and reduces the burden on your family to make difficult decisions during an already stressful time.

Medicare Open Enrollment:

October 15 - December 7, 2025

Open Enrollment is your annual opportunity to review and make changes to your Medicare coverage. To ensure you have the most cost-effective coverage and that all your prescription needs are met in 2026, it's important to review your **Prescription Drug Plan** or **Medicare Advantage Plan** during this time.

Need help?

HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program) is here to assist you. To schedule an appointment with a HICAP counselor:

Call us at **707-444-3000** or **800-434-0222**

We will begin scheduling appointments the **first week of September 2025**.

Appointments are **limited** and scheduled on a **first-come, first-served basis**, so be sure to contact us early—spots fill up quickly!

North Coast Aging and Disability Resource Connection (NCADRC)

2020 - 21

Senior Planet classes provided in Humboldt County; submitted application to become emerging ADRC with Tri-County Independent Living.

2021 - 22

Held 2022 Elder Abuse Awareness Conference; Senior planet classes began in Del Norte.

2022 - 23

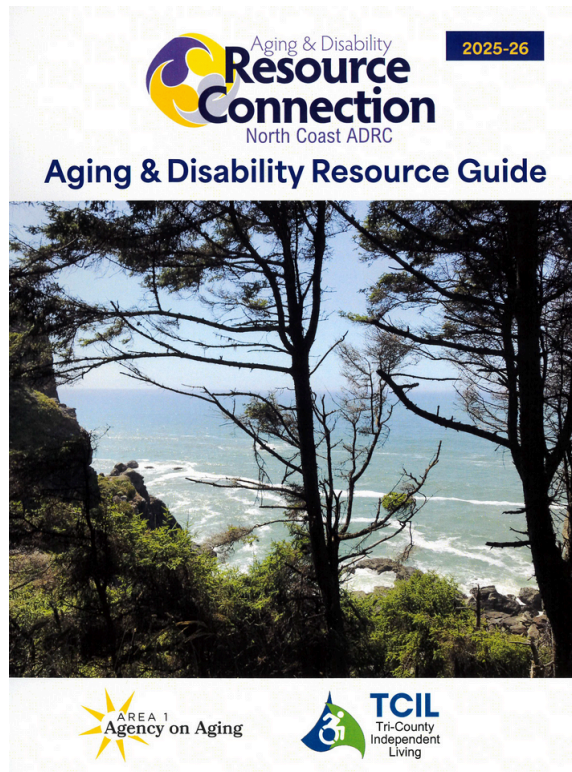
Provided hands on support to older adults in Rio Dell after the December 2022 earthquakes; awarded Broadband Adoption grant to bring digital access and training to Del Norte; offered CalFresh Healthy Living classes and application assistance in Del Norte.

2023 - 24

Conducted needs survey resulting in input from 1700 older adults across Humboldt and Del Norte; Became a Certified Age Friendly Employer (CAFE); received ADRC designation.

2024 - 25

SB1249 signed into law, proposing changes to California Area Agency on Aging system. Two day Elder Rights Summit established to replace the Elder Abuse Awareness Conference; 25-26 ADRC Resource Guide released by North Coast ADRC, replacing the Senior Information Guide.



New Resource Guide!!

The new Humboldt County Aging & Disability Resource Guide is now available in print.

If you need a print copy, you can pick one up at the TCIL Eureka office on **Tuesday, August 5, 2025 from 1:30-3:30 PM.**

Print copies will continue to be available at both the TCIL office and at A1AA during regular work hours.

The guide is also available online at northcoastadrc.org.

Wallet-sized resource cards with a QR code linking to the site are also available. A digital version will be emailed when ready. Our goal is for people who can readily access the website to find the guide there. Print copies are primarily for people who can't easily access the website as well as for professionals who can share information from it with consumers.

Other ADRC News

For Organizations & Service Providers

The NCADRC is seeking extended partners who provide Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS). Current partners include Open Door Community Health Center, Redwood Caregiver Resource Center, Adult Day Health Care of Mad River, and Arcata House Partnership. Interested in partnering? It's free. Contact Lisa Leon for details at lisa@tilinet.org.

ADRC Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee members provide valuable input to the NCADRC staff and leadership regarding ADRC development and administration. We currently seeking consumers to serve on our Advisory Committee. Your voice and lived experience are essential in shaping services and policies that support older adults and individuals with disabilities in our region.

If you are interested in applying, please contact: **Eddie Morgan, Executive Director, TCIL - (707) 445-8404**

Upcoming Events

WE'LL SEE YOU THERE !

July 2025

07/11

TCIL Resource Guide Open House

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

139 5th St, Eureka

07/15

A1AA Board of Directors Meeting

2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Check the calendar on the website for details

07/16

Willow Creek Healthy Living Fair

10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

07/17

Anna Zivarts: When Driving is Not an Option

7:00 PM

Arcata's D St Neighborhood Center

07/18

Eureka Housing Authority Ice Cream Social Resource Fair

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

07/22

Tabling at Fortuna Farmers' Market

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

07/23

Homeshare Meet &Greet

2:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Eureka Main Library

07/25

TCIL Block Party

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

286 M St, Suite C, Crescent City

07/26

Del Norte Health Fair

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

07/30

Elders Yearly Barbecue

11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Mattole Valley Resource Center

07/30

St. Vincent DePaul's Annual Barbecue

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

35 W 3rd St Eureka

August 2025

08/05

TCIL Resource Guide Open House

1:30 AM - 3:30 PM

139 5th St, Eureka

08/04

A1AA Advisory Council Meeting

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Check the calendar on the website for details

08/16

61st Annual Yurok Salmon Festival

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

190 Klamath Blvd, Kamath

08/23

Wiyot Goutsuwe'n, Wiyot Day

2:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Table Bluff Reservation, Loleta

08/26

TCIL Expo

10:30 AM - 2:30 PM

901 Myrtle Ave, Eureka

September 2025

09/06

Tolowa Dee-Ni Day

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Howonquet Hall Community Center

101 Indian Ct, Smith River

09/16

A1AA Board of Directors Meeting

2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Check the calendar on the website for details