

A Good Reminder...

From Keith Logan, Executive Director

I recently drove a Meals on Wheels route, and it gave me renewed appreciation for all that our volunteers do—every day—for our clients and this community. Here’s the week that was...complete with silver linings.

It began as one of those weeks we all dread...heavy rain every day...especially during the time when we pack and deliver meals. During one of the “gully washer” days, a couple of our volunteers got stuck in a ditch near the home of the first client on the route. They called the office, and Kevin Colin (MOW Program Coordinator) scrambled to find a substitute to finish the route. Overhearing the need, I volunteered...in part to help and in part because it had been a long time since I had done a route; I thought it would be good to see some of our clients again. Fully knowing my little car was a) too small to carry the meals, and b) too low to negotiate flooded streets, I grabbed the key to COA’s minivan. The fact that I had that option is the first silver lining because that van was donated to COA a couple of years ago...and boy do we use it! So, with my trusty ride, I downloaded the route to the Mobile Meals app on my phone and headed out to meet the stranded volunteers.

Sure enough, they were in a flooded ditch and awaiting a tow truck. We were glad to find each other and commiserate briefly, but there was food to deliver, so we made the transfer of meals to the van. Like the pony express, one horse was left behind and the next hurried on. They assured me assistance was on the way, so I turned my attention to the task at hand. Meanwhile, the deluge continued, and I began juggling the placement of frozen meals, side items, milk, and the annual Christmas Gifts flyer we were beginning to distribute to clients.

I’d like to say the rest of the day went swimmingly (pun intended), but it didn’t. There were a number of roads and driveways with deep standing water, and a couple of times I worried about whether I would bottom out or get stuck somewhere myself. Two clients did not answer their doors, so I had to return to the vehicle, call the clients (unsuccessfully), and then call the COA office to have them follow up with emergency contacts.

Then things turned almost comical. Upon leaving a client’s home, one of the van’s windshield wipers came loose from its arm and flopped around as the wipers swished water back and forth across the windshield. Back out into the rain to get it reconnected. Later, another client had two inches of standing water in front of their front steps and no other path to the door. I laughed as the phrase, “soaked from head to toe” became my reality. Still, another meal was delivered.

At the end of the run—squishing back to my office—I realized that all my experiences were just a day in the life of our amazing volunteers. And for that, I want to express my gratitude. Your grace and commitment to taking care of older adults in our community is exemplary. In my book, the US Postal Service doesn’t have anything on you...“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night (nor even faulty wiper blades) stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds. Bravo!”

Planned Giving



Cash may be king...but stocks, insurance, and real estate are equally valuable. If you are contemplating year-end-giving or are in the process of planning or revising your estate plans, we ask you to consider putting the Council on Aging into your plans. COA can be a beneficiary of your life insurance policies or your IRA without affecting your day-to-day cash needs. COA can also receive appreciated stocks and real estate. This would not only help lift this organization, but it may ease your tax burden. Potentially, you may be able to avoid paying capital gains tax, enjoy a charitable deduction off your income taxes, and avoid brokerage fees on stock transfers (as opposed to paying sales commissions).

We invite you to consult with your attorney, tax advisor, or the Community Foundation of Henderson County (where COA has a small endowment). The Community Foundation can outline options for you to establish a legacy that helps make sure, “No One Ages Alone.”

Welcome Tiffni Baxley

Meet Tiffni...COA's new Director of Support Services. She was born and raised in Florence, South Carolina and has lived here in Western North Carolina for the last four years.

The first thing people often ask of Tiffni is about the unusual spelling of her name. "My mother wanted it to be Tiffany. But my dad (who was a mortician and a clown with the Shriners) said, 'That's fine, but we will spell it differently because she will be different.' My dad had a wicked sense of humor. He passed in 1983."

How did you choose your career?

"It chose me. I went to Columbia College and studied Music Education. Then, I got married (too young) and divorced. I needed a job and health insurance. Fortunately, a nearby nursing home hired me because of my music background. I fell in love with elders and quickly moved up the chain to being an Administrator/Executive Director. That led to a 28-year career in Long Term Care: ranging from Continuum of Care Retirement Community, Skilled Nursing, Assisted Living, and Memory Care.



What do you see as the opportunities presented to you in this new position?

After I get my bearings, I'd like to expand the services we provide and develop programs that can be long lasting and become benchmarks for our mission. I want to deepen our relationship with Henderson County and attract more resources to our table. I would also like to be a part of learning about and assisting with potential grant opportunities to help COA.

In your spare time...

Cooking is my therapy. Born and raised in the south, I was making biscuits in my great grandmother's dough bowl (which I still have) when I was 4. I love being outdoors, and I love animals. When I lived in Cowpens (SC), I had a 5-acre horse farm with 55 animals! We hosted birthday parties for children—complete with pony rides and a petting zoo. We had alpacas, horses, donkeys, fainting goats, other goats, potbellied pigs, etc. I enjoy hiking, tent camping, and fishing. As for my love of music...I'm a big fan of James Taylor (have met him several times!). I study Native American traditions and spirituality—particularly Lakota Indian.

Meet Two Volunteers

One of the great things about COA volunteers is their flexibility. Working with people—whether through Meals on Wheels or in our Thrift Stores—means they are in dynamic situations every day. Pile COVID-19 on top of that, and it can be quite a rodeo!

Fortunately, COA attracts people who can go with the flow. Two of those folks are featured in this issue: Eileen Langdon and Larry Lynn. Eileen works in the Etowah Thrift Store, and Larry helps at the Hendersonville Thrift Store. When you read about them, think also of their brothers and sisters in arms who are on the front lines making sure goods can be sold at our Thrift Stores. As you know, those sales help pay for meals COA delivers to homebound aging adults throughout Henderson County.

Larry Lynn



Larry Lynn was born and raised in Washington, DC. He lived there 30 years, and then spent some time in Florida before landing in Raleigh, NC for about 25 years. There, he operated a portrait studio and photography lab. Larry retired to Flat Rock three years ago, and he began driving for Meals on Wheels—doing the Apple Country route—until the pandemic hit. Instead of retreating, Larry moved forward by working at the Hendersonville Thrift Store two days a week. "I really enjoy working with Angie and all the people there. I started out with books and working the donation door until the electronics guy quit due to Covid. I love books, and love to read. I am no electrician, but I check out all the donations that are electrical, clean them up, and get them out on the floor." Larry has many hobbies, including riding on his Indian motorcycle; taking his classic street rod to car shows; and playing guitar and bass at weekly jam sessions with friends. Though he's primarily a rock/blues musician, Larry runs with local country and bluegrass players. In his spare time (?!), he also paints with pastels. Can you say, "Renaissance Man?"

Eileen Langdon

When Eileen Langdon and her husband moved to North Carolina in 2013, they had a lot of leftover packing materials. Thinking the neighborhood thrift store in Etowah could use the bubble wrap, she went with bubbles in hand. There, she met COA's version of a walking recruitment poster...Jean Fears (one of our stalwart volunteers). After a great sales pitch and a little paperwork, Eileen began a long and fruitful "career" as a volunteer in the Etowah Thrift Store. The timing was impeccable as the Christmas shopping season was underway. Eileen tapped into her extensive retail experience (her family owned and operated a store in New Hampshire), and she was off and running. A few years after that (2019), she was off and driving...for Meals on Wheels.



She picked up the Horseshoe route and, as she says, "My favorite part—and I bet you hear this all the time—is the clients!" Eileen's ebullience is contagious, and the appreciation the clients have for her is obvious. She continues to pack and deliver meals when she can, but her first love is the thrift store...and it is gearing up for Christmas (her favorite time of year). Eileen comes from a big Italian family, "Noisy and we love to eat!" she exclaimed. She is known for her biscotti, which she prepares and shares around the holidays. For her, it's all about making people happy. She likes to say, "If you find a person without a smile, give them one of yours!" We're glad Eileen gave us some packing bubbles...and so much more. Thanks for helping us make life good for aging adults in Henderson County.

Magnetic Attraction

Admit it.
You're drawn to us.
It's an inexorable attraction.
Whether it's our mission or our vision, you see the value in what COA does for Henderson County...especially via Meals on Wheels. As you know, it truly is "more than a meal."



Our regular delivery of nutrition—coupled with wellness and premises checks—often is the only interpersonal contact some of our clients have during the week. You can imagine the reception our volunteers get when their vehicle rolls up to a client's house. Hopefully, "wearing" one of these car magnets is a badge of honor and a point of pride... and an easy way for our clients to recognize who is in their driveway. And, who knows, maybe our drivers enjoy residual benefits such as getting a "wave-in" when merging into traffic and other niceties associated with being identified with COA.

NOTE: Our new volunteer coordinator, Nicola Singer, came up with some additional, smaller signs that can also be used by MOW drivers. These handy signs can be placed inside the vehicle to let folks know the driver is on "official business."

When MOW Really Works...



Every now and then, we lose a Meals on Wheels client...to improved health! That's the kind of "loss" we like to celebrate. If the fundamental goal of Meals on Wheels is to provide nutrition to aging adults in Henderson County so they can age independently in their own homes, then Karin Levi scored a touchdown for COA!

Karin has been on our Midtown Route for nearly two years. She suffers from systemic lupus—an inflammatory disease caused when the immune system attacks its own tissues. At least a few of the symptoms are chronic fatigue, joint pain, and skin rashes. It can last for years and there is no cure, but treatment can help. Karin is bearing up under the weight of lupus. She contacted us last month and let us know that—after 20 months of regular delivery of Meals on Wheels (which she credits, in part, to her much improved condition)—she wanted to come off the Midtown Route and make room for others to receive the service. Wow! Not only are we touched by her personal recovery, but we are heartened by her thoughtfulness in sharing the benefits of Meals on Wheels with others who are in need.

This is the kind of story that makes you want to take a victory lap (or do an endzone dance), doesn't it? For all the folks who help us with Meals on Wheels—donors, volunteers, food suppliers, staff, etc.—we say, "thank you and well done!" Here's hoping Karin continues on her path to good health.

TRAY-psing along!

Navin Johnson (played by Steve Martin in "The Jerk") got really excited when his name appeared in the phone book, "The new phone books are here! The new phone books are here!" We're not jerks, but we are thrilled to have new plastic trays in which to serve frozen meals to our Meals on Wheels clients! Through a grant from Meals on Wheels America (and smart shopping by David Cameron, Director of Nutrition Services), we are now packing and serving meals in recyclable plastic trays ("Oliver Trays", per the manufacturer). Our vendor, Pardee Hospital is fully on board with this change, and the transition has been well-received. Retired psychologist, Roger Mansfield, called to tell us about how the new microwaveable trays are an immense help to him and his wife (MOW clients). "Thank you so much for the service, and these trays are really a great improvement."

Not only are the new trays better for the environment, but they also allow our clients to pop them directly into the microwave without having to go through a messy transfer from aluminum to some other container. This saves time and effort...and is safer because aluminum cannot be heated in a microwave!

As if that's not enough good news...we're also packing snacks and meals into new biodegradable bags we've acquired with grant funds. So, instead of being part of the problem, we're part of the solution...taking care of Mother Earth. The bags are rated to biodegrade in a landfill in .about seven years...as opposed to virtually never. And, they are both larger and stronger than the previous versions used. Again, we thank Meals on Wheels America for the funds to make this change...to a "Greener and Better" way to serve our clients.



Tres Amigas



Did you know that the Council on Aging does a lot more than Meals on Wheels? Maybe you need advice or guidance related to aging and your needs for housing assistance, medical appointments, transportation, and assisted living...and you don't know where to turn? Fortunately, COA has a team of educated and trained social workers who can help. Meet the "Three Amigas" (Suzanne, Marina, and Wendy). Whether it's helping you find a ride or a housekeeper, learning about assisted living options, or something else...our professionals can help. Combined, they have more than five decades of experience in matching clients' needs with needed services.

Contact COA at our main number (828-692-4203), and one of our "amigas" will follow-up with you.

SHIIP Doesn't Just Happen

The North Carolina Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) is a flagship program for the Department of Insurance. Recognized as a national model for seniors' information programs, SHIIP has grown to serve all one hundred counties of North Carolina since its start in 1986. SHIIP's volunteer counselors help Medicare beneficiaries, their family members, or caregivers navigate the complexities of Medicare plan options, enrollment, coverage, and billing by serving as a reliable resource for clear and unbiased information. If you're interested, SHIIP needs volunteer counselors.

What does it take to be a SHIIP volunteer counselor?

Volunteer Counselors must meet several requirements before being accepted into SHIIP training.

- Can get along well with others; have a sensitive and caring attitude; have good written and oral communication skills
- Have computer skills for counseling
- Not be an active insurance agent and not have an immediate family member who is an insurance agent
- Have the willingness to learn and the ability to retain information relevant to health insurance provisions and claims filing procedures
- Not have a criminal background

What would I be responsible for as a volunteer counselor?

- Complete the SHIIP online Volunteer Basic Training course to become a "Certified" SHIIP Volunteer Counselor
- Attend convenient quarterly follow-up meetings throughout the year
- Provide a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service per calendar year with volunteer service including:
 - Training, counseling clients and beneficiaries in your community via telephone calls, and/or meeting with the clients face to face
 - Researching a topic or issue, contacting outside parties such as providers and insurance companies with the client's permission, and assisting with claims filings
 - Working with the County and/or Volunteer Coordinator in performing SHIIP outreach activities, such as health fairs and speaking engagements
 - Completing on-line SHIIP Activity Report forms each time you participate in a counseling session or an outreach event

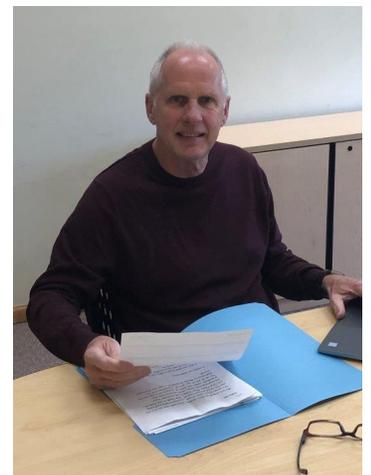
How do I learn more about becoming a volunteer counselor?

Phone: 1-855-408-1212 / www.ncshiip.com

email: ncshiip@ncdoi.gov

COA is fortunate to have a Certified SHIIP Volunteer Counselor at work with us each week. Chuck Kelsey (Chuck is married to our Finance Manager, Betsy Kelsey). Chuck very ably and unselfishly shares his time each Thursday at COA's office to help guide people through the process. This is an invaluable service, and we are grateful to Chuck for the considerable time and expertise he donates.

This service is offered in conjunction with a working agreement with the Council on Aging of Buncombe County (COABC). We are grateful for the partnership we enjoy with COABC. For more information, please check out their website at: <https://www.coabc.org/programs/medicare-health-insurance/>



Tribute to Betsy Kelsey

All good things must come to an end and, sadly, the end of Betsy Kelsey's tenure as COA's Finance Director is near at hand. She retires at the end of the year and, to put it mildly, she will be sorely missed. Anyone who knows Betsy knows she is smart, hardworking, and dedicated. We have been fortunate to enjoy her faithful stewardship of the organization's finances for eight years. Those same people who know of Betsy's considerable business acumen, also know of her modesty. She shuns attention and the spotlight. But we prevailed upon her for a few insights into her time with COA, and she graciously agreed. What follows is a glimpse into one of our treasures.



Born and raised in the northeast, Betsy has lived in the south for most of her life, including a few years in Houston with a construction company. After her first "retirement," she and her family moved to the Hendersonville area. While she was not looking to work full time, the open position at COA (and Betsy's desire to use her skills and experience in finance and human resources) was too tempting to resist.

The nonprofit angle was new to her, but she enthusiastically dove in and quickly mastered the role—developing policies, best practices, internal controls, and managing eight successive clean audits. The best part of her job, Betsy says, "...has been educating and informing non-financial-oriented employees on the importance of using accurate numbers to track and forecast statistics." In terms of a legacy, Betsy is proud of the fact that she is leaving COA with a very healthy balance sheet, which ensures the continued growth and expansion of services to Henderson County's aging adult population. "I hope such expansions come in the form of enhancing our wraparound services, so COA is seen and used as more than a meal delivery service," she said.

In the words of Keith Logan, Betsy's impact can be described as follows, "Betsy has been a rock in this organization since her arrival eight years ago. She helped put the organization on solid financial ground while never losing sight of our mission to serve older adults in Henderson County." He added on a personal note, "I will greatly miss Betsy's dedication, knowledge, balance of service and stewardship, and guidance."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tributes and donations to honor Betsy's tenure at COA can be made directly to the organization via the website (<https://coahc.org/donate/>), or they can be mailed to our office at 105 King Creek Boulevard, Hendersonville, NC 28792.

It's beginning to look a lot like...

Okay. Color us guilty. We don't want to skip over Thanksgiving, but this is our last chance to catch you before the Christmas holidays and we need your help. Michele Linson, our office manager, loves Christmas! And she makes it a point—each year—to see that our Meals on Wheels clients get some holiday love. We do this in two ways: 1) a shoebox gift program in partnership with the Times-News, and 2) a holiday gift program sponsored by COA. We invite you to help with one, the other, or both!

Christmas Giving

Everyone should have at least one nice thing to open at Christmas, right? COA tries to make this happen, and we welcome your assistance. We do some "Secret Santa Surveying" of what folks need and we make a list. Really! Michele Linson keeps the list and make tags that can be picked up from her at the COA office. You can get started now! See Michele, get a tag, do a little shopping, and wrap the gift with the accompanying tag.

Drop off the gift at COA's office (between 9am and 4pm) by Friday, December 3rd. Delivery will begin the following week.



Shoeboxes

Now in its 23rd year, COA and the Times-News collect shoeboxes full of things aging adults might need...along with a few nice things, too. Last year—in the middle of a pandemic—we delivered more than 400 shoeboxes to our Meals on Wheels clients throughout Henderson County. This year, we'd like to reach 500 people. Here's how you can help. Fill a shoe box with small, useful items and gifts (hygiene items, gloves, large-print books and puzzles, notepads, calendars, flashlights, refrigerator magnets, etc.) Include a gift card, mark the box for male or female (or either), and wrap it up nice and pretty! Drop off the boxes here at COA: 105 King Creek Boulevard, Mon-Fri, between 9am and 4pm, until Friday, December 10th. COA's staff and MOW volunteers will deliver the gifts the week of December 13. Together we can brighten the holidays for people who will be delighted to be remembered. We thank you and the Times-News for your generosity and help.





Caregiver Respite for Janice Payne

If you've ever wondered, "Does grant money actually reach the people in need?" we have some good news for you. This is the story of Janice Payne, a caregiver in Henderson County, who was a recipient of resources from The Dogwood Health Trust Caregiver Respite Fund—administered by the Council on Aging.

Janice has been a caregiver for more than twenty-five years; looking after the elders of her family (and others) and helping them make their ways through both physical and mental illnesses. As you might guess, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already stressful situation due to the isolation factor and the lack of face-to-face support systems. This impacted not only Janice, but her husband as well...for whom she is a full time caregiver.

Thrilled to receive the Dogwood HealthTrust Caregiver Respite grant, Janice immediately went to work making the most of the "gift." She arranged for a full time caregiver for her husband, and she took a brief trip to Savannah, Georgia. She had been unable to travel since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2019. "The alone time was so important to and for me. To be able to sleep long hours without worry, swim, enjoy different healthy foods and relaxing music...was just beautiful," she recounted.

"I was broken and worn down; I just didn't realize how much." Having time to rest and reflect, she recognized her stress level was extremely high, and that the caregiving break was a blessing. She talked about a very painful shoulder and neck, attributed to stress, which eased up as she began to breathe and relax during her trip. Her time away also gave her the opportunity to renew and readjust her mental attitude, allowing her to let go of some of her frustration and anger, while also recognizing the need to firm up the boundaries that were already in place.

Now, even more focused on self-care strategies, her quality of life has improved, and Janice is more confident and better prepared to cope with the stressors that make caregiving such a challenge.

"Many thanks for such an unexpected and timely break. Full time caregiving can be a killer, and I am indeed grateful to you for allowing me the opportunity to take some needed moments for myself, so that I can continue to do what I must. Now, I do so with a healthier mental attitude."

The Good News Corner

The Council on Aging received a cold call for help a few weeks ago, and our team went into action. Kat Nevel, site manager at the Sammy Williams Center, learned that some out-of-state relatives were concerned about "Barbara." Barbara's sister and daughter live in New York, and they asked if someone would check-in on her. We didn't know Barbara and she was not a client, but Kat assembled a box of frozen meals, dry foods, toiletries, and puzzle books, and went right over to check it out.

At first, Barbara was reluctant to open the door because she suffers from dementia, but Kat's patient demeanor paid off and she was invited inside. As she scanned the premises, Kat noticed there was no running water. In addition, there were bills and unopened mail strewn about the house. Barbara was uncertain as to whether her bills were paid, so Kat immediately contacted the water department. Unfortunately, without Kat's name on the bill, the water department would not take any action. Enter Marina Kovalyova, COA's community resource specialist. She turned on her charm (and turned up her advocacy), and Barbara's water was turned on the next day. Marina went a step further and signed Barbara up for Meals on Wheels (now there is a steady stream of food and regular wellness checks). COA staff continues to consult with Barbara and her family to help determine what other needs COA that might help address.

Nice to know when a call comes in or a need arises, COA is ready to render aid.

Who's New?

Christina Rutherford, Store Associate, Hendersonville Thrift Store

The "youth movement" is alive and well at COA! Christina Rutherford has joined our Hendersonville Thrift Store as a new associate, and we are thrilled to have her talent and enthusiasm. Starting earlier this fall, Christina is helping in all aspects of the store's operation (sorting, stocking, and selling). Originally from Los Angeles, Christina moved to Hendersonville last February driving cross-country. She was introduced to the 802 Spartanburg Highway store by her mother (a regular shopper). Christina also thanks her mother for exposing her to the value and good generated by the thrift store. She loves being part of an organization with "a greater purpose" that serves the community. When asked what she likes best about the job, Christina offered the following, "It feels great to be part of a place where people are genuinely happy and motivated." She gives credit to Angie Baney, Manager, with the good vibes in the store. "Angie instills positive energy into all the staff and volunteers at HTS," she said. In her spare time, Christina likes long-boarding (elongated skateboard), fungus photography (taking pictures of mushrooms), and hiking in the surrounding area.



In this part of the newsletter, we're giving a glimpse into the lesser-known ways in which COA (and its terrific people) make differences in the lives of the people we serve. Each vignette is an example of how our staff and volunteers go the extra mile to make sure a client is safe.