In September of 2015 I had the pleasure of completing an assessment for a World War II veteran and Purple Heart recipient Gene Wiseman. Early in the assessment, it was apparent that he had some severe physical limitations. He was not able to use either of his arms for daily living tasks due to extreme essential tremors. The client informed me that since March of 2015 he had been unable to feed or bathe himself and had been receiving assistance from a community veterans volunteer group. During the conversation, Gene stated that he received care from the Veteran’s VA Satellite clinic in Show Low but had not received any assistance with his tremors. He said that the cause of the tremors was apparently due to the loss of charge in the battery for his deep brain stimulator implanted in his chest. The purpose of this device is to control the tremors by way of pulsating necessary signals to the brain. He has lived with this device for 11 years and had not had any prior issues. The battery replacement into the device entails a surgical procedure requiring a 2-inch incision into his chest. The whole procedure takes approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. With this device, he had been able to live completely independently. Since March, he’s had to rely on the kindness of others for help with completing basic life necessities.

Immediately after completing the assessment, I visited the Show Low VA Clinic to follow up on the status of his service authorization from March. After a brief conversation with the front office staff, I elevated the inquiry and was able to converse with his nurse. She informed me that the initial authorization for the procedure along with his 90 days of in-home health care had both lapsed. The VA had allowed authorizations to lapse and opted to apply for Arizona Long Term Care (ALTCS). By the end of the conversation, the client’s nurse stated the authorizations would be re-activated. At that time, I took it upon myself to be the point of contact from this moment forward and was advised it would take about two weeks for the authorization to be processed.

Continued on next page
Veteran Success Story – Continued

After two weeks, I visited the VA again and met directly with Gene’s social worker. He informed me that my client needed to be on ALTCS due to his condition. I realized I needed to elevate the situation through our director.

Our AAA director contacted Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick’s office. I later received a return call from Steven Flanagan with Veterans Affairs. We discussed the challenging situation with my client. He sent me paperwork for a second congressional inquiry into the handling of this client’s medical situation. The report was completed and signed off by our client. Steve resubmitted the report and warranted elevation within the system.

After several more meetings with other VA Social Workers, who then seemed much more gracious and willing to accommodate me, the process seemed to be moving forward. Over the next five weeks, I completed over sixty phone calls to the VA, contracted insurance agency (Tri-West), and neurosurgeon offices. We finally secured a surgery date. While challenges of incorrect coding referrals, expiring authorizations and coordination of schedules seemed to plague the Show Low VA, Steven Flanagan took back the reins and filtered everything through Phoenix VA. On November 24th, our client was transported with his VA volunteer travel companion to Phoenix and had his device and his independence restored. I am happy to report that moments after leaving Barrows Neurological Institute, I received a phone call to report that he was able to eat on his own again.

Racelle Carlson

Mary Beals-Luedtka Joins NANASP Board of Directors

Area Agency on Aging Director, Mary Beals-Luedtka was recently appointed as a member of the Board of Directors for NANASP (National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs). The board consists of members from agencies, the aging network, academia and industry professionals. NANASP’s Mission is to strengthen through advocacy and education those who help older Americans.
Volunteer Ombudsman Holiday Activities

Mary Mordino (pictured left) is a Volunteer Ombudsman working out of the Prescott Valley Office under Bruce Reed. She not only volunteers with AAA/NACOG, but also volunteers with a musical group called “Joyful Noise,” which sings at various Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing facilities. Recently, we learned that she has yet another volunteer gig during the Holidays. During a little Holiday luncheon we do for our volunteer Ombudsman, Mary told us this story about what plans she and her crew of “elves” were going to be doing the Holidays. Bruce Reed and I knew this had to be shared with the public.

Mary Mordino has started a tradition of going to a long-term home that she volunteers as an Ombudsman to decorate wheel chairs and walkers. She schedules an hour activity in the activity room and invites friends to assist her.

This year Mary and her “crew of Elves” engaged in this activity on December 16th. They dressed up like elves and residents loved their bright outfits. They all bring the decorations and invite them to assist with decorating their chair or walker. Some of the favorite decorations are glittery angels, bells and big bright ribbons. Mary and her Elves also take little favors to give each resident. This year they made reindeer with clothespins out of wine corks! According to Mary Mordino, “It’s awesome to see smiles on their faces.” Mary is a great example of the awesome volunteers we have here at AAA!

P.J. Janik
Area Agency on Aging marks 40 Year Anniversary with Successful Conference

Area Agency on Aging held its’ most successful Elder Issues conference to date this past fall. The event was bookmarked by two excellent speakers on Elder Justice. Bob Blancato gave our Keynote address: A Year of Anniversaries: The Future of Aging. Mr. Blancato is president of Matz, Blancato & Associates and National Coordinator of the Elder Justice Coalition. Paul R. Greenwood, Deputy District Attorney, San Diego, gave our closing address with an enlightening and sobering presentation on the effects of elder abuse and challenges for prosecution.

Area Agency on Aging Director, Mary Beals-Luedtka presented the 2015 Director’s Award to Fritzi Mevis, Executive Director, Prescott People Who Care.

The conference also featured excellent breakout sessions on, Brain Health, Alzheimer’s initiative, fraud watch, mindfulness, creativity, elder abuse, depression, and substance abuse. Later in the afternoon four presenters took part in a general session elder abuse panel.

We would like to acknowledge our sponsors who made this event possible and are thankful for their support.

We are grateful to Nicole Kiddoo, AAA Assistant Director for organizing this wonderful event.

Make sure to Save The Date for May 19-20 for the 2016 Aging in Arizona State Conference!

www.regonline.com/az4aagingsummit

Pictured above (L-R) Sgt. Ben Scott, Paul R. Greenwood, Shawn Trobia (AARP), Lynn Larson (Division of Aging And Adult Services), Mary Beals-Luedtka, AAA Director
Help for Long-Term Care Planning

Area Agency on Aging – NACOG announces a new service available for those planning on long-term care support in their lives or for a loved one. From finding in home care to locating the ideal assisted living or nursing home, identifying public and private supportive resources, to assisting with health care power of attorney – Options Counseling provides the options available to make informed choices. Call Toll-Free 1-877-521-3500 for more information and to schedule an appointment.

Sue McCauley
Options Counseling Consultant
Smart Choices For Seniors
Jessica Reissner
Jessica has shown great leadership this past year and was selected as our top employee! She has an “I can” attitude. “What do you need done,? I’ll do it”. During the turnover of Care Coordinator staff at the Lakeside office, she covered all of the clients with only some help from her supervisor. We had several screening of applications before hiring. When we did hire we hired 1 & half positions instead of just one position to cover the case load. Once job vacancies were filled, she worked with and trained the new staff. Jessica is a great problem solver who stays calm and collected. When there is a problem she checks with all the individuals involved then comes up with different ideas for resolving, getting everyone involved with the end result. She has also showed great understanding in working with the new DAARS computer system this past year. She will always check if she is interpreting new instructions correctly, then passes information on to the team. She is a fantastic team leader!!!!

Kathy Kent

Melba Whitmore
Melba Whitmore, who has been a Medicare Benefits Counselor for over a year now has shown to be Compassionate, understanding, and patient. She is professional and pleasant with clients. She never complains about hours, case loads or tasks, and always volunteers for extra duties. Melba pays attention to details and shows exceptional reporting skills. She is always researching/referencing even the smallest of issues for a client and goes the extra mile.
Melba has shown that she is willing to meet clients at home or in the community. She helps volunteers with issues they don’t understand and takes on the extra load when other staff are out or volunteers are not available. She maintains a wealth of knowledge and always reviews/studies monthly training materials.

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The client satisfaction surveys returned on Melba are always excellent. Comments are directed towards her patients, understanding, and knowledge. Melba has been a very positive addition to our Medicare Benefits program! 

_Jana Bays_

_Josena Burke_

This was the year of change for all of us and it was especially felt in Central Intake. Change is good…..It is positive because it presents challenges, and challenges provide opportunities. Opportunities come in many forms, it may be to evaluate a new system and figure out ways to make it work, or it may be to become a trainer. Opportunities may also come in the form of professional or personal growth. I would like to recognize Josena Burke, as the shining star in this year of change, who took these opportunities and made a difference.

The new software system, DAARS, was full of challenges both within our agency as well as for our providers. There were huge amounts of data prep work that needed to be done for the transition from the old data base, AIMS, to DAARS. Josena, being the diligent and highly motivated person that she is, was able to enter over 800 entries into the system in a very short time frame. In fact, this accomplishment was recognized by the DAAS staff because it helped to expedite the work they had to do.

Josena is a great problem solver. Due to the new DAAS regulations, she developed a new training tool packet and service log tracking system to help providers become more successful in managing units. She also gave them a new check list so they could keep up with the changes. She trouble shoots and effectively communicates to providers, DAAS and AAA staff. Josena understands the importance of providing extra support and communication to everyone, in order for all to be successful.

As the Resource Specialist, Josena keeps track with new resources and continual updating. She also keeps up with the news. For example: she heard that the AZ Biological Resource Center (body donation tissue company) was being investigated for illegal sale of body parts and removed that resource from our database.

Using the new software system, DAARS, required a lot of training. Josena was part of the training process for providers and one-on-one training for two of our staff on congregate meals. This experience increased her confidence to give presentations and train. I have seen Josena grow both professionally and personally in this area.

When Josena first started work here, she told me that she loved to work with data. She tells me that she is always seeking ways to perfect the process and her performance. You can tell that Josena loves her job! Josena, you bring great value to the C.I. team and to our agency. You are appreciated and I am so proud of your accomplishments! Congratulations Josena on Making a Difference!

_Margaret Czachowski_
Coconino County Community Services Hosted Their Annual Holiday Dinner on December 17 at the Joe C. Montoya Community & Senior Center in Flagstaff. The event was a very nice lunch and brought in many familiar faces. This was a great lunch for all the deserving seniors here in our little community. Lunch consisted of prime rib, potatoes au gratin, veggies, and salad. Dessert was a fruit tart. Delicious!

Area Agency on Aging NACOG staff assisted in serving the holiday meal for the participants – some of whom dressed up for the occasion. Other servers included city and county officials, county staff, and members of the Coconino County Sheriff Department. The delicious food made it a special meal. There was lots of laughter and camaraderie – a really great time! AAA NACOG staff were grateful to have been a part of the festivities!

Celia LaFave and Dion Connelley

Aurelia Martinez
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