

Annual Giving

Thanks to the generosity of our community, Aging Ahead raised more than **\$19,000** through our Annual Giving Campaign, an important step toward our **2026 goal of \$100,000** in donations. Every dollar goes straight to work, strengthening the services older adults rely on to remain healthy, independent, and connected in the place they call home.

Our donors continue to share why this mission matters so deeply to them:

"My mother is benefitting from invaluable services she receives through skilled nursing care in Wisconsin. I believe older adults like my mother have spent their lives contributing to society. Supporting Aging Ahead, even in a small way, is my way of honoring that legacy."

We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave. **Your support is making a real and lasting difference**, not only for older adults, but for the families who love and care for them.

How a \$100,000 CDBG Grant Helped Aging Ahead Deliver Relief Across St. Louis County

When prices rise, the first thing many people cut back on isn't entertainment, it's essentials. Groceries. Soap. Toothpaste. Basic items that should never feel out of reach.

This year, Aging Ahead was able to respond in a powerful way



thanks to \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from St. Louis County. With this support, Aging Ahead launched a countywide project designed to do two things older adults urgently need right now: reduce the burden of rising costs and strengthen emergency preparedness for individuals most at risk.

As we spoke with older adults throughout the county, one message came through clearly: many are doing everything "right," yet still struggling. Fixed incomes can't stretch the way they used to. And for homebound seniors, limited transportation and mobility can make even small emergencies feel overwhelming.

Aging Ahead focused on a simple goal: get practical, life-supporting supplies into the hands of those who need them most—before the next crisis hits.

With CDBG funding, Aging Ahead purchased and distributed vital supplies across St. Louis County, including:

-  **450** grocery boxes filled with shelf-stable food
-  **225** tote bags of personal care items
-  **675** shelf-stable emergency meals
-  **225** emergency preparedness kits

Each box, bag, and kit represented more than items, it represented peace of mind. The reassurance of having food on the shelf, basic hygiene products on hand, and emergency meals ready if the power goes out or severe weather strikes.



Distributing this volume of supplies across St. Louis County took more than funding, it took a network. Aging Ahead staff and volunteers worked side-by-side to pack, load, transport, and deliver items throughout the county. This was teamwork in its truest form: people showing up for neighbors. We are so proud of our Aging Ahead network. This project reminded us that when our community comes together, the impact is not only significant, it's deeply personal.

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One recipient shared:
"We are beyond thankful for the assistance! Receiving the items made me cry."

At its core, this project wasn't just about emergency kits or food boxes, it was about helping older adults feel safer, supported, and not alone. It was about preventing crisis, strengthening stability, and making sure older St. Louis County residents have what they need to remain secure in their homes.

This initiative is proof of what's possible when funding, teamwork, and compassion align. Because growing older should never mean going without.



Get To Know Laurie, SCA, St. Peters Center

•**What's the best part of your job?** The people, not only do I work with wonderful staff, but I also genuinely love the older adults we serve. I love supporting their aging journey and learning from their life experience.

•**What is an achievement you are proud of?** Earning my bachelor's degree. I went back to college as a non-traditional, older adult, working and full-time mom. It was a challenge, but something I really wanted to accomplish. The atmosphere of our senior center along with the great support committee who share my vision for creating a space for seniors to eat, share memories, make connections, enjoy activities, and just feel safe being themselves.

•**What keeps you motivated?** I stumbled into the nonprofit world by accident about 15 years ago, I enjoy people and helping them in meaningful ways. It always amazes me how small, simple acts and kind words can make a huge difference in an individual's life and collectively can make a positive difference in a community.

•**How do you like to spend your spare time?** I enjoy reading, writing, music, spending time with family, and being in the outdoors.

•**What's the most valuable career advice you've been given?** I've been fortunate to have several wonderful mentors in my career who've taught me valuable lessons about compassionate care, time management, self-care, and so much more. To sum up all that I've learned over the years, I would do it with these two quotes from Maya Angelou: *"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."* *"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*



Adopt-A-Route | Support-A-Center | Support Family Caregivers

Aging Ahead Champions Deliver A Difference!



Aging Ahead Champion Spotlight



Assistance Home Care

For Allen and Sally Serfas, supporting Aging Ahead's Mission is deeply personal. As Sally's mother battled Alzheimer's disease, Meals on Wheels volunteers provided nourishment, comfort & meaningful connection for her parents when they needed it most.

Today, Assistance Home Care, a locally owned in-home senior care provider serving the Greater St. Louis & St. Charles areas, is proud to be a Champion of Supporting Family Caregivers! Allen & Sally encourage you to learn how your business or organization can Deliver A Difference by becoming an Aging Ahead Champion!

Proud Aging Ahead Champion of Supporting Family Caregivers

www.AssistanceHomeCare.com Available 24-7-365! Call: 314-466-3227





The Easy Guide to Hydration

Many older adults experience a reduced sense of thirst which can result in drinking less. This can lead to frequent, often overlooked, dehydration. Dehydration can cause confusion, fatigue, and increase the risk of falls.

Benefits of Hydration

Sharp Mind: Even mild dehydration can cause confusion, memory fog, and dizziness – a major risk factor for falls

Improved Digestion: Fluid works with fiber to prevent constipation. Staying hydrated is essential for regular, comfortable bowel movements

Muscle and Joint Comfort: Water keeps the fluid around your joints and muscles healthy, helping with mobility and reducing cramps

The Warning Signs: Watch Out for Dehydration

You don't have to wait until you feel desperately thirsty. Keep an eye out for these early signals:

- **Dark-colored urine** (should be pale yellow/straw-colored)
- **Dry mouth** and a feeling of stickiness
- **Sudden fatigue, weakness, or feeling sluggish**
- **Headaches or dizziness** when standing up

3 Ways to Hit Your Fluid Goal

- Pair every snack and meal with a full cup of fluid. Use your three meals as hydration reminders!
- If plain water is boring, add slices of lemon, lime, cucumber, or frozen berries to give it a flavor boost without sugar.
- Many foods contain lots of fluid! Enjoy hydrating snacks like:
 - **Fruits:** Watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, oranges
 - **Vegetables:** Cucumbers, celery, lettuce, tomatoes
 - **Soups and Broths:** Especially clear, low-sodium varieties

Disclaimer: If you have kidney disease, heart failure, or are on fluid restriction, please talk to your doctor or a Registered Dietitian about your specific fluid needs.

Medicare Advantage Open

The Medicare Advantage Open enrollment period runs each year from January 1st through March 31st each year. During this time, individuals in Medicare Advantage can make one change to another Medicare Advantage plan or drop to Original Medicare and add a Part D plan. There is still time to make a change (before March 31). If you have questions about this, please reach out to Missouri SHIP directly.

A concerning article published in Managed Healthcare Executive last October, based on a survey conducted by eHealth, reported that only 51% of Medicare beneficiaries were planning to review their Medicare plan for 2026, down from 63% the prior year.

The annual open enrollment period is over, but those in Medicare Advantage continue to have the ability to change through March 31st. **Now is the time** to confirm your doctors and other providers are IN THE NETWORK for 2026. Once the Medicare Advantage open enrollment period ends, you will not be able to make a change to your plan just because your doctors are not in the network. Based on specific circumstances, you may qualify for a special enrollment period for another reason.

Another big change was to the premium for some stand-alone Part D plans. One plan in our area went from \$44.90 to \$94.90 a month. This caught some people by surprise. Unless you receive Extra Help from Social Security, you likely do not have a special enrollment period opportunity. If you do have Extra Help, you may have an opportunity to change plans. This is a BIG reason to read the Annual Notice of Change each September.

If you found your plan ended, you may have a 2 month Special Enrollment Period to pick another plan. Please contact Missouri SHIP directly to discuss your situation.

If this creates more questions for you, please reach out to Missouri SHIP to talk it through with a counselor. You can easily reach a SHIP counselor by calling Missouri SHIP at 1-800-390-3330.

Rebecca Rabbitt Pogorzels, Pharm.D., [R.Ph](#), certified counselor, Missouri SHIP.

<https://www.managedhealthcareexecutive.com/view/most-medicare-beneficiaries-find-plan-shopping-confusing-ahead-of-2026-annual-enrollment-period>



Board of Directors Spotlight

Board of Directors President, Gary Cronin, has held all officer positions over the years and is passionate about the work we do. We appreciate Gary and thank him for his time, wisdom, and commitment to those we serve!

What inspired you to join the Aging Ahead Board?

I was familiar with Aging Ahead and felt I could contribute to the agency and was appointed by the Jefferson County Executive as a Board member.

What do you see as the Agency's greatest strength?

The dedication of our administration and staff to see that those who need us are well taken care of. You can see the joy and feel how proud the employees are when you talk about Aging Ahead and those we serve.

What challenges or opportunities do you think lie ahead for us?

Uncertainty of continued government funding and finding a way to secure funding through other means. To stay ahead of the things we have no control over, to increase support for our mission, and continue the high standard of support we offer to our clients.

What's something people might be surprised to learn about you?

I enjoy working with the developmentally disabled. I volunteer for a respite program for the families of the disabled called reCess and I substitute teach at Seckman High school and Middle School for Special Ed.

What would you say to someone considering joining our Board?

You have to be dedicated, strong and stand up for what you feel is important and in the best interest for those we serve.

What message would you like to share from the Board with Aging Ahead participants?

The board is here for YOU. The board will support the administration and staff to bring aging resources and services to you. The board wants all our clients to have a healthy, safe and great quality of life on their journey of aging.



#Humblebrag

This holiday season, the South County Center became a true hub of generosity thanks to a beautiful community partnership that brought comfort and joy to older adults who often spend the holidays at home alone.

Alice Appel (SCA) and Angie Reed (HDMC) worked closely with our home-delivered meal participants to learn what they were facing this season, listening with care and compassion as individuals shared both practical needs and simple holiday wishes. From there, they helped create thoughtful wish lists tailored to each person, reflecting not just what was needed, but what would make them feel seen, remembered, and celebrated.

Pam Sterneau from Garden Place then picked up the wish lists and shared them with her employee group, and once again, the Garden Place team stepped up in an extraordinary way. Their employees purchased gifts for our homebound clients and wrapped each one with care. Pam personally returned the beautifully wrapped packages to the South County Center, ensuring every detail was handled with love. Garden Place has supported this tradition for more than five years, and their continued generosity has become a meaningful lifeline for the older adults we serve.

With the help of Aging Ahead volunteers, these gift bags were delivered directly to the doorsteps of homebound individuals, bringing warmth, kindness, and holiday cheer to those who need it most. For many, it wasn't just a gift, it was a reminder that their community hadn't forgotten them.

This effort is a powerful example of what's possible when caring people come together, neighbors supporting neighbors, and a community spreading goodness.



3rd Annual Thanks and Giving

The Community Options and Services staff added a new project to their Third Annual Thanks and Giving themed meeting on November 12th. The 21-member team assembled "cake kits"

which they assembled from items donated by department members. The kits were delivered to an area food pantry for distribution in time to be included in Thanksgiving meals.



Connecting Caregivers

We see you; we care about you and we're here to help! We become caregivers for a variety of reasons. We might be raising relative children, caring for an adult relative with a disability or

for an older adult. Common threads among the caregivers are strength and commitment. However, these amazing people often become so wrapped up in their responsibilities that they miss the opportunity to notice these traits in themselves and to admire what they have been able to accomplish. The following article will guide caregivers through simple steps to remind them of these accomplishments.

A Self-Reflection Journey for Family Caregivers Recognizing how you've grown and all you've accomplished. We are caregivers, we navigate tangled emotions, medical visits, complex diagnoses, and so much more. But sometimes, under that responsibility and the whispers of self-doubt, we forget to see ourselves in our own stories. We forget just how much we have accomplished. How much we have learned. We write all of it off and just doing what we have to when getting through the day.

Let's change that for a moment. Step away from the to-do lists and the worries, and embark on a journey of self-reflection. Put down that judgmental magnifying glass ready to criticize yourself!

Today we channel the kindest person you know. The one who is a light to be around and always knows exactly how to be our cheerleader. We will become our own cheerleaders, recognizing the insane amount of things we have done and the strength we've amassed along the way.

Remember the Start:

Close your eyes. Transport yourself back to the beginning of your caregiving journey. Write down what you remember seeing, smelling, hearing, and feeling. What were your fears? Your hopes? How did you envision yourself navigating this path? Did you expect the twists and turns? What were the unexpected lessons? What were your quiet victories? This is your personal starting line.

Identify Your Milestones:

Think back on moments of growth. That time you mastered a medical procedure, the day you navigated a daunting conversation. When did you hold someone's hand through a storm? What hurdles were cleared? Identify each obstacle overcome as a marker on your map of strength. Trace these mile-

stones, celebrate the peaks you've scaled, and acknowledge the strength it took to get there.

Remember You: Who are you? What hidden talents, passions, and skills do you have? What did you develop along the way? Maybe it's your bottomless well of patience, your uncanny ability to organize chaos or your knack for making the mundane feel like a warm hug. List these skills, appreciate their power, and remember they were always yours, even before this journey began.

Uncovering Your Supports: Who has been your rock, your sounding board, your silent cheerleader? Acknowledge them, remember their kindness, and celebrate the network of support that helped you soar.

Rewrite the Narrative:

Now, dear caregiver, look at the map you've drawn, the network of support you've acknowledged. This is your story, a tale of growth, of strength, of love in its most profound form. Rewrite the narrative in your mind. You are not just a caregiver, you are a human, and individual. You have accomplished so much and come so far!

<https://www.caregiving.com/content/a-self-reflection-journey-for-family-caregivers>

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Our Community Options and Services Staff are here to help by calling
St. Louis County: 636-207-0847
Jefferson County 636-253-0558
St. Charles County: 636-579-0555
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Delegates to the Silver Haired Legislature Choose Their Priorities For 2026

The 52nd Annual Conference of the Silver Haired Legislature took place in Columbia on October 14, 15, and 16. The 62 delegates in attendance chose their Top Five Priorities and formulated plans to advocate for senior issues during the coming legislative session.

After spirited debates in the Legislative chambers, the delegates chose these issues as their Top Five Priorities for the 2026 legislative session:

- Foot Care Funding
- Increase the Medicaid Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) with an Inflation Rider
- Resident Dwelling Accessibility Tax Credit (DAT)
- Real Property Tax Exemption for Veterans with a 100% VA Rated Service- Connected Disability
- Modify Eligibility for Aged and Disabled Medicaid

Also, a big congratulations to our newly elected Missouri SHL President, Patricia Bowers, from the Aging Ahead delegation! Her leadership and commitment to advocacy will help guide SHL forward as they prepare for another impactful year. Below is the list of newly elected officers.

President	Patricia Bowers
1st Vice President	Janet Baker
2nd Vice President	Peggy Don Yates
Secretary	Mary Kramer
Treasurer	Thomas Eyssell
Immediate Past President	John Kramer

If you would like to view pictures from the session: the DHSS Flickr account to view photos of the event <https://www.flickr.com/photos/49879968@N04/albums/72177720329716434/>

Thank you to all of the SHL delegates for your energy, insight, and continued passion for making Missouri a better place to age. We're so proud to work alongside such a dedicated group of volunteer advocates!

To learn more about the SHL, please visit AgingAhead.org or email info@agingahead.org

Newsletter Ad Space

Place your ad HERE! Your ad helps Aging Ahead print and share our quarterly newsletter with thousands of homebound seniors and caregivers. Do you want to see your ad here, reserve your ad space today! Contact Kerri at kgallagher@agingahead.org.

Aging Ahead thanks the advertisers included in this newsletter for their financial support. Please understand that Aging Ahead is in no way recommending or promoting these entities.



CHOICE Programs and Partners

Aging Ahead and WashU are working together to bring an exciting new Virtual Program to qualified people who receive

Home-delivered meals through Aging Ahead or enjoy meals at one of our community locations. If you received a letter or flyer regarding the Aging Ahead-Connect Virtual Senior Center and are interested in learning more about our online programming, please contact our CHOICE Team at 636-207-4218. We hope to connect with you soon!

Aging Ahead is excited to partner with The Oasis Institute to provide programming proven to improve balance, prevent falls, and manage disease, diabetes, and arthritis. Check out our events page for upcoming courses and information on how to sign up.

You can enjoy in person CHOICE programming in Sullivan, Arnold, House Springs, University City and at The Lewis and Clark St Louis County Library Branch. Check out our events page for upcoming programming and information on how to sign up. agingahead.org/what-we-do/programs-activities-and-locations/

Weekly and Monthly Programing

- Arnold:** Monday and Wednesday 12:30—2
- Sullivan:** Monday and Thursday
- House Springs:** Monday and Wednesday 11-2
Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-2
- Lewis & Clark:** Fridays 10-11
- University City:** 2nd Friday each month



Thomas Eyssell
Treasurer
Chair - Aging Ahead