

# AGING **best**

Area Aging on Aging



## **New Virtual Visits Program Helps Battle Social Isolation**

Social isolation is a significant issue impacting older adults. The impact it has on older adults' health is considered equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes per day due to the increase in mortality rates. The onset of COVID-19 has brought the number of older adults experiencing social isolation to an all-time high. Individuals experiencing social isolation may have increased feelings of hopelessness, lack of energy and anxiety. The long term effect can put their physical health at risk as well.

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In an effort to decrease social isolation in our 19-county region, Aging Best has created the new Virtual Visits Program (VVP). A grant from the MFA Oil Foundation helped with the initial funding of the program which is available in all 19 counties.

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The program will make it possible for homebound older adults to virtually visit with friends, family, church officials and service providers.

Aging Best staff members will be carrying tablets to home visits. It will not be necessary for participants to learn how to operate them. The virtual visit will take place while the staff member is on site to handle the technological aspect of the virtual visit. Participants will be able to view pictures on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, hold actual face-to-face conversations with friends or family members interested in connecting and search the internet for news and events.

Staying connected to the outside world is an important part of overcoming social isolation. The Virtual Visit Program will create that connection without participants having to leave home during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you or someone you know could benefit from the Virtual Visits Program, information is available at: 800-369-5211.

## Medicare Part D Open Enrollment Begins

Open enrollment for Medicare Part-D will be available October 15th – December 7th. This is the time to review your current plan to make sure you are on the most cost efficient plan. Formularies on medications change or co-pays could go up in price. The Community Options & Services team at Aging Best is well-connected with the Medicare system. Our team is unbiased, we do not work for, nor represent any insurance company, and are ready to help you find the most cost-effective plan for your needs using only information located on [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

You may qualify for help paying Medicare Part D premiums and the co-pays on your medications through the Social Security Administration.

**MEDICARE PART D**  
**OPEN ENROLLMENT**  
**Starts Oct. 15 & Ends Dec. 7**

**Questions About Plans or Coverage?**  
**WE'RE HERE TO HELP!**

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**You may be eligible if:**

- You are single with a monthly income below \$1,615.00 and have resources below \$14,610.00
- You are married with a monthly income below \$2,175.00 and have resources below \$29,160.00

You may qualify for help paying Medicare Part B premiums through the state of Missouri. This could be a savings of \$144.60 per month!

**You may be eligible if:**

- You are single with a monthly income below \$1,426.00 and have resources below \$7,860.00
- You are married with a monthly income below \$1,940.00 and have resources below \$11,800.00:

If you are new to Medicare Part D, you can begin the application process a month before your Medicare starts, the month of, and 3 months after your Medicare starts..

Our team members are able to help you complete the application as well as checking eligibility for money saving programs such as with SNAP (Food Stamps), energy assistance and other savings programs.

Our goal is to connect you with the resources you need to ensure you are receiving any assistance you may be eligible for.

Due to COVID-19, we are not accepting walk-ins. Appointments in your area can be scheduled by calling 800-369-5211. Masks are required for all in-person visits, and proper sanitation will be completed between appointments. Virtual visits are also available.

## **Aging Best Expands Pet Packs Program**

Pets can play an important role in our lives as we age. They provide unconditional love, entertainment and companionship. Caring for a pet also requires more physical movement and mobility. Pets need to be fed, let out, walked or have a litter box changed. Having that daily routine plays an important part in the physical and emotional health of older adults. Pet ownership has been shown to reduce stress and have an astounding effect on depression. Focusing on the care of a pet may reduce thoughts of loneliness or physical discomfort by redirecting the focus to something positive.



Joyce Godbee of Columbia enjoys the companionship of her cats, Si, Ruger and Kip. "They keep me entertained and busy. I don't know what I would do without them," says Joyce, pictured above with Si. However, the cost of food and care for them has put a strain on Godbee's budget. She relies heavily on Aging Best's Pets Packs Program for supplemental cat food. Like Joyce, many older adults must cut other costs in order to provide for their beloved companions. They may even sacrifice their own nutritional and household needs to ensure a pet has enough to eat. They are viewed as family members and treated as such. Through partnership with Second Chance, Aging Best has been able to provide supplemental pet food to older adults in Columbia since 2017.

Seeing the need for this assistance in other counties, Aging Best recently applied for and received a Meals on Wheels Loves Pets grant, supported by PetSmart Charities. The grant will enable Aging Best to expand the program to additional counties. Though it will cover the basic program costs, the volume of requests for assistance will require continual pet food, veterinary service and financial donations. "Pet food donations from local retailers have been a real blessing," said Melissa Schulte, Network Coordinator for Aging Best. "With community support, we can continue expanding to every county we serve."

If you are or know an older adult struggling with the cost of pet care please call Aging Best at 800-369-5211.

If you would like to donate pet food, veterinary service or make a financial donation please contact Melissa Schulte at: [mschulte@agingbest.org](mailto:mschulte@agingbest.org) or 573-489-3260.



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## Getting to Know Aging Best's Team. This Month's Team Members



Ronda Giger  
Regional Ombudsman Coordinator

What is your title, and how long have you been with Aging Best?

Regional Ombudsman Coordinator. I will have worked here for 5 years in October of this year.

What kind of services do you provide?

As an Ombudsman I advocate for the rights of residents living in long-term care homes and investigate concerns to help find a solution. We also train and supervise Volunteer Ombudsmen who are assigned to a specific nursing home.

What is your favorite part of your job, and do you find it to be a challenging position?

I have many favorite parts of my job, but I love it when I walk into a nursing home and a resident who I have worked with before looks at me and says, "I was going to call you today and here you are!" It happens all of the time.

It is challenging on an emotional level when you are working with a resident or family member who is feeling extremely vulnerable and/or scared. The COVID-19 pandemic lockout has been a new kind of challenge for us, especially with our most vulnerable residents who because of diminished eyesight, hearing or dementia relied so much on the face to face interaction with their loved ones.

Tell us a little about your life or background.

I grew up on a farm in North Missouri. I've been married to my best friend for 23 years, Tim. We have 2 boys, Nick who is 21 years old and Jake who is a senior in high school this year.



Cori May  
Director of Finance

What is your title, and how long have you been with Aging Best?

I am the Director of Finance and have been with Aging Best since October 2019.

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What kind of services do you provide?

I am responsible for maintaining the budget and overseeing expenditures. I oversee the day to day finances and make sure we are in compliance with all State and Federal rules and regulations.

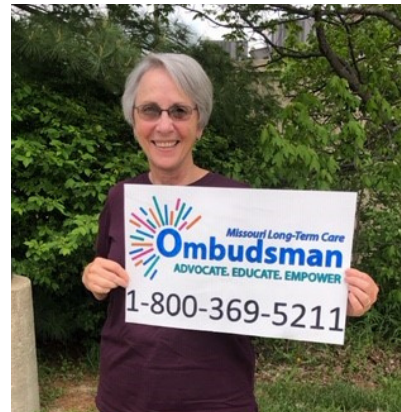
What is your favorite part of your job, and do you find it to be a challenging position?

I like dealing with the people, as well as digging into the finances and collaborating with peers on solutions as well as new opportunities. This is a very challenging position, and I have conquered many things since I have started. There are still things out there, so it is a joy coming to work each day to work towards finding more solutions to help our Seniors.

Tell us a little about your life or background?

My husband, two children (ages 19 and 15), and I live in Linn. We do multiple things including drag racing, hunting and fishing – as a family. My main hobby is I'm a basketball Mom. My daughter plays competitive basketball in the summer and plays for Helias during the school year.

## Ombudsman Volunteers Find It Rewarding



Stephanie Young has been an Ombudsman volunteer for more than two years. Devoting at least one day a week to the program allows her to make a difference in the lives of the residents of the residential care facilities she works with. Before the COVID-19 pandemic Stephanie made in-person visits but had to make changes in recent months. She now conducts Ombudsman services through telephone conversations with social service providers. The calls ensure there are no residents with concerns that could be addressed by Aging Best's Ombudsman team. "I love working with the residents. I believe I get as much out of the program as they do," Young said.

"The mission of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is to provide services to all residents of long-term care homes through advocacy and education. If you are interested in joining this network of volunteers contact us at 800-309-3282 or visit: [health.mo.gov/ombudsman](https://health.mo.gov/ombudsman)"



## Activities and Thanks



Thank you to The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri for the extra pork and chicken our centers received. Deliveries were made to Rolla, California and Fulton. Many of our centers were able to meet the truck and benefit from the products received.

Thank you to both the North and South Columbia Orscheln Farm & Home stores for donating to our pet food program. Donations make it possible for us to assist many more seniors struggling with pet costs.



Staff at the Cuba and Bourbon Senior Centers are making the most of local produce donations. Homemade jams, pickles, salsa, breads and other items are being prepared weekly. What a great way to see that produce does not go to waste while also promoting additive-free foods!

California Nutrition Center celebrated National Watermelon Day by serving watermelon curbside and challenging everyone to an at-home seed spitting contest. Contestants reported their distance back to the center. Kim Drummond, Center Administrator, stepped outside to give it a try. A first time spitter, Kim recorded an impressive 80 inches.



Linda Kahler of rural Miller County receives home delivered meals, bread and produce. Staff or volunteers from Iberia Friendship Hall deliver Linda's meals every week. For more information on home delivered meals in your county please call 800-369-5211.

## Senior Farmers' Market Vouchers Are Still Available

The Senior Farmers' Market vouchers are still available in Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Cole, Dent, Laclede, and Washington County. The program, coordinated by Aging Best and funded by USDA, FNS, allows qualifying seniors to receive up to \$50 in vouchers to be used at local farmers' markets. The program was designed to increase the consumption of Missouri grown produce and honey while supporting local farmers.



Applications must be completed by October 1st and the program will end October 31st. If you are or know of a senior who may be interested in receiving vouchers call 800-369-5211 for more information. If you are homebound it is not necessary to be present to redeem your vouchers. A friend or family member of your choice may be assigned as a proxy.



SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET  
NUTRITION PROGRAM

Mid-Missouri  
Aging Best AAA  
(573) 443-5823





# AGINGbest

To see each person live his or her best possible life

We have been focusing a lot lately on the importance of volunteers to help in a variety of ways throughout our region. Many people know about helping in the senior centers and delivering meals. But I do not believe everyone is aware of all of the other opportunities to help others in need. Even during this difficult time with social distancing and increased isolation for all of us, there are ways you can safely make a significant difference in the lives of people who are struggling to hold on to hope.

Social Isolation is a term we hear a great deal about these days. We know that some people prefer solitude and that is perfectly healthy. However, there have been numerous studies with frightening outcomes that indicate that for many people, being isolated can lead to a variety of negative impacts on their body, mind, and soul. The same studies also indicate that even some meaningful contact and connection can help people avoid despair.

We don't know what the upcoming months will bring to our world, but we do know that whatever comes our way (even if that just means shorter days and cold weather) we can face it better if we work together and support each other.

We need help reaching out to those who are isolated and lonely. You can write letters and cards to people who would be thrilled to receive a warm and supportive message.

You can establish "pen pal" relationships with people who would love to tell you about their lives and interests. You can connect to people through technology or help them connect to other resources through technology. You can read a book or play a game with someone over the phone. You can conduct simple and informal assessments with people to ensure they have everything they need. There are just so many ways that you can help make someone's life a little brighter.

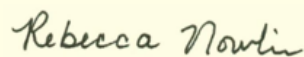
Please give us a call or email us if you are interested in sharing a little bit of your time and energy.

Please also give us a call if you need some additional support and connections.

1-800-369-5211

Help4u@agingbest.org

Sincerely,



Rebecca Nowlin, LPC  
Chief Executive Officer



Serving:

Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Crawford, Dent, Gasconade,  
Howard, Laclede, Maries, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski,  
Washington