



***Growing Together: New Initiatives, Partnerships and Perspectives
Shape Bay Aging’s COVID-19 Response***

Bay Transit named Outstanding Community Program of the year

The Virginia Transit Association (VTA) has selected Bay Transit as the 2020 recipient of their Outstanding Community Program for rural transit systems. The award recognizes Bay Transit’s partnership with Rappahannock Community College (RCC) that improves student access to educational opportunities by providing free rides on Bay Transit buses to all four RCC campuses. Bay Transit will be recognized at VTA’s Annual Awards Luncheon at the historic Jefferson Hotel in Richmond on November 16th.

The faces of Helping Neighbors volunteers and recipients

Bay Aging’s Helping Neighbors program is now in its second month of delivering dinner hot meals. Volunteers from across the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck are delivering over 1,400 hot meals a week prepared by seventeen local restaurants to area seniors with underlying health conditions who need to stay in their homes during the COVID-19 crisis. “We are absolutely thrilled by the community support that ‘Helping Neighbors’ has generated,” said Kathy Vesley, President and CEO of Bay Aging. “We are also happy that so many of the region’s hard-hit local restaurants have been able to take part in Helping Neighbors as it provides much needed revenue for them.”



Helping Neighbors volunteer Aime Jenkins delivers a hot meal to Edward Baker.



Bay Aging’s Board Chairman, Stanley Clarke, also volunteers to deliver meals through Bay Aging’s Helping Neighbors



Her smile shows Deltaville resident Shirley Wesley enjoys her Helping Neighbors meals.

Volunteering is a family affair

With the growth of participation in the Helping Neighbors and Meals on Wheels programs, Bay Aging needs more community volunteers. Fortunately, there has been no shortage of civic engagement as members of area Rotary, Moose and Ruritan Clubs, parishioners from area churches, inspired individuals, and Bay Aging board members and staff have all pitched in as volunteers.

Many volunteers work in partnership with their husband or wife, while some work with their children such as Jessica Schlosshan, who has been a Meals on Wheels volunteer in Mathews County for over six years. Jessica and her daughter, Raven, a recent graduate at Mathews County High School, “love Meals on Wheels,” Jessica said. “The Meals on Wheels recipients love Raven and she loves them. It’s become a family affair for all.”



Bay Aging’s Mobile Food Pantry service

To provide additional services with both public health and economic stimulus benefits, Bay Aging launched a “Mobile Food Pantry” program delivering shelf-stable groceries, sourced from local grocery stores and the Healthy Harvest Food Bank to area seniors who are sheltering at home. In the Mobile Food Pantry’s first week of operation, 250 bags of groceries were delivered to the residents of Bay Aging’s senior apartments across the region.

Now the Mobile Food Pantry program is being expanded to include interested residents of senior apartments in addition to the ten income-restricted senior apartment complexes operated by Bay Aging. “We had planned to expand Mobile Food Pantry deliveries over the next several weeks by enrolling additional seniors and local grocery stores into the program,” said Bay Aging’s President and CEO Kathy Vesley. “We are now partnering with Hands Across Middlesex to substantially increase our collective abilities to provide not only shelf-stable groceries but meat, bakery goods, fresh produce, paper products, cleaning supplies, pet food and much more. While we have a robust Meals on Wheels program and continue to provide free restaurant meals to area seniors through our Helping Neighbors initiative, these services are restricted to people who are sixty or older. Hands Across Middlesex’s resources are available to people of all ages. Together we are growing the Mobile Food Pantry program.”

For more information about Bay Aging’s Mobile Food Pantry program, or to volunteer or donate, please visit Bay Aging’s website at www.bayaging.org. For those without access to the internet, please call Bay Aging at **1-800-493-0238**. For more information about Hands Across Middlesex, call or email Dave Cryer at (804) 363-0280 or davecryer@aol.com.



Bay Transit’s David “DJ” Taylor loading groceries for delivery to area seniors.

It's never too early to foster a sense of civic duty in the kids

For Bay Aging's Senior Vice President of Housing, Joshua Gemerek, volunteering is in the family's genes. Josh, his wife Robin, and their sons from left to right, Henry, Theo and Beckham were among the many Bay Aging staff members and volunteers who delivered groceries to the residents of Bay Aging's senior apartment complexes across the region in support of the Mobile Food Pantry program. In addition to volunteering, Gemerek is in the final stages of preparing the groundbreaking of Bay Aging's new senior apartment complex in Gloucester County which will be called Daffodil Gardens II.



Seed packets distributed to "Grow Together" with our neighbors

With all the safety measures we must take during the COVID-19 pandemic, coming up with creative ways to engage with one another can be challenging. Bay Aging volunteers and staff miss their time together with area seniors, so we've come up with a fun new initiative called "Growing Together" for them to take part in. We recently distributed 600 seed packets to encourage participation in Growing Together by exercising green thumbs and growing the seed packets into Cosmos, Sunflowers or Zinnias. Participants are encouraged to take pictures of their flowers and email them to Bay Aging at growing@bayaging.org. For those without phones that takes pictures or aren't equipped with email capabilities we'll ask a Bay Aging volunteer or staff person to take pictures of them and their flowers and post them on Bay Aging's website and/or Facebook page.



Of course, not everyone is blessed with a green thumb. For those who would prefer to draw or paint a picture of their favorite summertime scene, we'll ask a Bay Aging volunteer or staff person to take a picture of their artwork. Just like the pictures of flowers, we'll post the artwork on Bay Aging's website and/or Facebook page.

Bay Transit keeps focus on customer service and safety



Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Bay Transit has operated without interruption ensuring area residents have access to transportation for healthcare services, work or other critical needs. On demand service continues to be available throughout the area Monday to Friday from 6 AM to 6 PM. Bay Transit's fixed-route service in Gloucester, Tappahannock and West Point are also operating as usual. To help ensure passenger and driver safety Bay Transit has implemented a number of precautionary measures including suspending all fare collection until further notice, installing plexiglass shields around the driver's seat, cordoning off seating to ensure social distancing among riders, cleaning buses daily, and requiring drivers and

riders to wear masks. For more information about Bay Transit visit our website at www.BayTransit.org or call the toll-free Ride Line at (877) 869-6046 to schedule a ride.

Community support helps drive initiatives

Bay Aging thanks the following community partners, as well as the many individual donors, who recently made generous donations to the Bay Aging Foundation:

- Bethpage Camp-Resort
- Sonabank
- B.H. Baird Insurance
- M & M Building Supply
- Consociate Media
- The Northern Neck Rotary Club



To learn about previous donations, please visit the “News” page on Bay Aging’s website at <https://bayaging.org/news/> to see last month’s newsletter.

Summary:

Bay Aging appreciates the many community partners, volunteers and donors who have helped us deploy these initiatives and quickly respond to COVID-19 challenges. For more information about how Bay Aging is responding to COVID-19, please contact Michael Norvell at mnorvell@bayaging.org or Kathy Vesley at kvesley@bayaging.org. To donate to Bay Aging, please visit our website at www.BayAging.org.