

Bay Aging Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

“Helping Neighbors” initiative launches across the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula

To support seniors, and those with underlying health conditions, to stay safely in their homes during the Coronavirus outbreak, Bay Aging launched its “Helping Neighbors” initiative throughout the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula in late April. Since April 27th, we have been delivering over 1,300 home cooked meals per week (nearly 5,500 per month) to area residents who want to stay in their homes and stay safe during this crisis. Several people have also signed up for meal, grocery and prescription medicine deliveries through the Bay Aging website. Helping Neighbors is operating in addition to Bay Aging’s Meals on Wheels program.

“The best people to help their communities are those within them,” said Kathy Vesley, President and CEO of Bay Aging. “We also launched Helping Neighbors in support of area businesses. We were very intentional about partnering with local restaurants as COVID-19 is clearly both a public health and economic crisis. Helping Neighbors will assist in addressing both issues and, thanks to volunteer recruitment support we received from Delegate Keith Hodges, we are fortunate to have a large enough cadre of volunteers to make it happen.”

The meals are being prepared by seventeen area restaurants including Angelo’s Pizza Co. in Montross, Linda’s Diner in Mathews, Nino’s Pizza in Callao, Bella’s in Tappahannock, Olivia’s in the Village (Gloucester) and Denson’s Chesapeake Bay Farm to Table restaurant in Colonial Beach. As Brian Oliff, owner of Angelo’s noted, “I’ve made some sound investments in my life but the one that yields the greatest return is helping people in need. We’re going to be preparing fried chicken, fresh fish, beef dishes and lots of fresh vegetables. It will be a really varied and healthy menu all made with love.”

Tony & George’s Seafood & Italian Restaurant helps kick-off service

Helping Neighbors was pilot tested in mid-April in West Point when the appreciative residents of Bay Aging’s Winters Point senior apartments were treated to delicious home cooked meals donated by Tony & George’s Seafood & Italian Restaurant. The meals were delivered by head waitress Carmen Mayfield, who has worked at Tony & George’s for over fifteen years. Ms. Mayfield, clad in a protective mask and gloves, greeted residents with the enticing aroma of fried chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, a warm dinner roll and a homemade brownie for dessert. “The Winters Point residents gave us a card thanking us for our kindness. It was lovely seeing the appreciation on their faces,” Ms. Mayfield said.



Bay Aging website provides Community Services List

Through a survey of area grocery stores and pharmacies, Bay Aging developed a guide that identifies businesses that offer special shopping hours for older residents, curbside delivery and even home delivery services. This comprehensive list of area grocery stores and pharmacies and any relevant services they are offering can be found at: <https://bayaging.org/community-services-during-covid-19-em.../>

Senior Outreach Call Center: staying in touch despite social distancing



Social distancing is the new normal. This is especially true for the 317 households of vulnerable seniors living in Bay Aging’s ten income-restricted senior apartments across the core service area. The new senior outreach call center was established for staff to conduct regular wellness checks with almost 1,600 apartment residents, day care, congregate, and Meals on Wheels consumers several times weekly. Wellness checks have always been an integral part of Bay Aging’s Meals on Wheels service so making phone calls or waving and talking from afar are very important to prevent loneliness and isolation while social distancing.

Bay Transit focuses on passenger and driver safety

There are many heroes who deserve recognition during this crisis including the men and women driving buses for our nation’s transit systems and our own Bay Transit drivers and staff. As much as possible, Bay Transit continues to operate as “normal” providing on demand services throughout the area from Monday through Friday from 6 AM to 6 PM. To safeguard drivers and riders alike, employee health checks are performed on all Bay Transit employees at the beginning of their shift every day, including checking for COVID-19 symptoms and taking their temperature. All buses are being disinfected several times a day. To minimize passenger and driver interaction, Bay Transit has suspended all fare collection. That means all passengers ride for free until further notice. As customers call in to schedule rides, they are pre-screened. To facilitate social distancing while on the bus, we limit buses to a maximum of three people, have installed plexiglass barriers around the driver’s seat and have seats taped off to keep riders separated from each other and away from the bus driver. In coordination with area hospitals, Bay Transit has suspended stops at Urgent Care facilities and hospitals along our fixed route lines in Gloucester and Essex County. As customers call in to schedule rides, we are asking them to limit travel to essential rides to work, medical appointments, the bank and shopping for necessities and we ask riders to wear face masks while riding on Bay Transit buses.



Surging demand for meals

Increased food insecurity is an unfortunate biproduct of the COVID-19 crisis. Bay Aging's Meals on Wheels program has experienced a surge in demand resulting in an eighty-one percent increase in the number of meals we are serving to over 20,350 per month. Enrollment has also expanded from the addition of clients from Bay Aging's Adult Day Care and Active Lifestyle Centers which were closed in accordance with the Governor's orders. Shelf stable meals are augmenting meal deliveries to further safeguard recipients from food shortages and meals are complemented with fresh fruits and vegetables through our partnership with Healthy Harvest Food Bank. Some meals being delivered to younger people with disabilities who do not meet Older Americans Act qualifications, and some to children in the homes of older adults, are being paid for with private monies.



Veteran Meals on Wheels Volunteer Carol Hamlett and Middlesex Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman John Koontz delivering meals.

Food Lion gift cards help those in need

Helping Neighbors is just one of several initiatives Bay Aging has launched in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Through a generous donation from the Food Lion Feeds Foundation, Bay Aging is also distributing Food Lion gift cards to a hundred of the neediest seniors throughout the region. "These gift cards will be a lifeline to many area residents who are in dire need of toiletries, pet food and other necessities not provided through our Meals on Wheels program," said Bay Aging's President and CEO Kathy Vesley. "At Food Lion, we're committed to nourishing our neighbors, and we know the towns and cities we serve are counting on us more than ever during this unprecedented time," said Jim Giffin, local Food Lion Director of Operations. "We're proud to support organizations such as Bay Aging that are working hard to help make sure our neighbors don't have to worry about where their next meal will come from."

The New Normal: virtual training and telehealth

Bay Aging's VAAACares team completed a statewide VIRTUAL training to certify twenty-five additional health coaches. Statewide Health Coaches are conducting telephonic interventions and when needed, will pick-up food from local Food Bank, etc. and deliver to the patient's door.

Bay Aging's Home Care Services division continues to provide in-home aid services for those who are nursing home eligible. We are serving between 25 and 30 clients per day. Aides are equipped with gloves and masks for in-home visits and are also calling 81 clients on a routine basis to check on them and ensure their needs are being met.

Taking care of veterans

Bay Aging's Veteran Directed Care program staff have maintained current services for approximately 250 employers and over 300 employees while enrolling new veterans as referrals are received from Veterans Administration Medical Centers. Bay Aging also led a nationwide web training session about using telehealth to enroll veterans into Veteran Directed Care and check in with them during the pandemic.

Dementia Friendly Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck

To support people living with dementia and their caregivers, an online newsletter containing resources for community assistance related to COVID-19 and what families need to know during COVID-19 was distributed to community organizations and



clients. The coronavirus pandemic can be especially challenging for people living with dementia. We believe it is important for people to know they are not alone during these challenging times. Our new Dementia Friendly Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck website can be found at:

<https://dementiafriendlympnn.wordpress.com/about/>.

Partnerships and activities established due to the pandemic:

- Kathy Vesley, President and CEO of Bay Aging was appointed to the Governor's Task Force on Long Term Care as Impacted by COVID-19
- Collaborated with area public schools, with special thanks to the Middlesex and Essex County Public School Boards, to redeploy Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies no longer needed after schools were closed
- Volunteer recruitment support for the Helping Neighbors initiative from Delegate Keith Hodges and his staff
- Partnered with area restaurants to deliver donated meals to residents of two Bay Aging senior apartments in West Point and Urbanna to pilot test Helping Neighbors initiative
- Area departments of social services, local and state governments, and many other community partners

New funding opportunities

- Funding requests were submitted to:
 - River Counties Community Foundation
 - Mathews Community Foundation
 - Gloucester Community Foundation
 - Meals on Wheels America
 - Dominion Energy
 - Food Lion Feeds Foundation
 - The Walmart Foundation

- The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Bay Aging has received generous donations from the following:
 - The Gloucester Rotary Club
 - Atlantic Spray Systems
 - The Gloucester Ruritan Club
 - The Abingdon Ruritan Club
 - The Middlesex County Rotary Club
 - Anthem HealthKeepers Plus
 - Kelsick Specialty Market
 - Food Lion Feeds Foundation
 - The Walmart Foundation
 - The Joyful Hands Ladies Circle (Severn Church)



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. We continue to explore, plan and launch new programs such as our “Mobile Food Pantry” which will begin the week of May 11th. Partnering with local community grocery stores such as the Urbanna Supermarket, Bay Aging will purchase and deliver bags of shelf-stable groceries to older residents throughout our core service area in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. 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.