In The Loop with Laurie

The importance of one word comes to mind as we continue to experience an unprecedented time – resiliency. To me, resiliency means having the power to bounce back from a set-back or unexpected event. How we are able to do this, really tells us a lot about our character and ability to connect with others for the support we need to come back even stronger than we were before.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the lives of older adults and so many others throughout Southeast Minnesota – SEMAAA’s hope is that it will generate renewed and innovative thinking. We are excited to team up with the MN Council on Foundations (MCF) Disaster Recovery Fund to meet the growing support service needs that are emerging during the pandemic.

The Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (SEMAAA) received $100,000 from the Minnesota Council on Foundations (MCF) to assist organizations serving older adults, persons with disabilities, homeless individuals and tribal communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for the opportunity to support nonprofit community agencies throughout the eleven county area of southeastern Minnesota to provide assistance with nutrition-related services, technology/virtual training and other related services.

Family Service Rochester is continuing to collect donations for items such as toilet paper, cleaning wipes and spray, hand soap, laundry soap, dish soap, diapers, wipes and personal hygiene products. Items are being distributed to older adults through Family Service Rochester. If you or someone you know are in need of these items, please encourage them to contact their social worker. If the individual does not have a social worker, please contact Annie at our office and she can help coordinate a referral for needed support - annie@semaaarochestermn.org

SEMAAA’s Executive Committee and Board of Directors unanimously voted to sign on to the Rochester Nonprofit Consortium’s Commitment to Action towards Racial Justice. SEMAAA joins over 60 other agencies that support the unified statement to stand in solidarity with those who seek justice and racial equality. I am excited for our agency to develop initiatives to listen, learn and act on incorporating diverse voices and perspectives within the services we provide to older adults in Southeastern Minnesota. If you are interested in learning more information about this commitment to racial justice, in our community – please visit the following site:

Commitment to Action towards Racial Justice

Enjoy your summer & stay well.

Finding Ways to Engage at Every Age,

Laurie
Executive Director

Essential supplies ready to be delivered!
Combatting Social Isolation and Loneliness in our Senior Population

As recommended by the MN Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control most of us continue to stay home, limit our trips to the store, avoid large social gatherings and generally keep a healthy physical distance when possible to avoid contracting or inadvertently spreading COVID-19. We know older adults are one of the most vulnerable populations due to having weaker immune systems and the likelihood of having at least one chronic condition. Following social distancing recommendations is clearly an effective way to limit exposure to this disease and stay well, however it has taken a toll on the mental and physical health of older adults in our region and around the U.S. Prior to COVID-10 approximately 1/4 of community dwelling older adults in the U.S. were considered socially isolated with 43% feeling lonely. Now, due to social distancing, this has only gotten worse and even includes residents in nursing homes, and assisted living and independent living facilities as people are required to isolate in their rooms to avoid spreading it within facilities.

We know social isolation and loneliness can lead to major health consequences. It has been linked to increased blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, depression, anxiety and an increased risk for Alzheimer’s Disease and other health challenges. By rightly following social distancing guidelines, many older adults have found themselves more isolated than ever and have not been able to pursue their normal activities and interactions that were so beneficial to their mental health and overall wellbeing in the past. One of the issues is the public messaging calling for “social distancing.” The term “social distancing” is misleading and we should really be saying “physical distancing” as there is no reason you can’t continue to stay connected to your family, friends and community in creative new ways. Just thinking about it differently can shift how you approach social connections right now. With this in mind here are some tips and strategies for staying connected and mindful of your mental health and wellbeing.

- Check-in with family, friends and neighbors, maybe even create a schedule. This can be on the phone, computer, or safely in-person if your space allows for it.
- If you are comfortable meeting with someone in person, wear a mask and stay 6 ft. apart and meet outside if possible.
- Consider volunteering and helping others more vulnerable than you. There are many opportunities in our communities to help support others by calling people through telephone reassurance programs, delivering meals or groceries or prescription drugs or even doing outside chores that have safety precautions in place.
- Attend an on-line support group. There are options through NAMI, Elder Network and other programs.
- Attend a virtual evidence-based program like SAIL or Tai Ji Quan to stay active, keep moving and be a part of group.
- Write letters to friends and family.
- If you have a phone there are many apps that allow you to see each other and talk which can feel more like a normal conversation.

More resources on page 4
Family Service Rochester receives grant for veteran home repairs

The Home Depot Foundation has funded veteran home repairs through Meals on Wheels America and local Meals on Wheels programs across the country since 2015. This initiative helps senior veterans with critical home repairs so they can age more safely and comfortably in their own homes. The funding helps older veterans or their surviving spouses with critical home repairs so they can age more safely and comfortably in their own homes. Several projects have been completed while others are underway. They include ramp construction, bathroom modifications, painting, and water mitigation. FSR was one of three in the United States to receive Meals on Wheels of America funding. For more information contact Kathy Voss kvoss@familyservicerochester.org or phone at 507-287-2010

In addition, Family Service Rochester continues to lead the Olmsted County’s incidental collection and distribution of essential items with the onset of the COVID-19 Stay at Home order. FSR became the drop off site for donations of nonfood essentials like hand sanitizer, laundry detergent, bleach, diapers, TP, soap, toothpaste, and the like. Social workers, school personnel and nonprofit case workers then place an order for families they serve picking up all their essential incidental supplies at FSR with but one stop. Nonperishable food boxes from Channel One are also available at the same location. At this time more than 1,000 families have been served. To donate or receive essentials contact Kelli DeCook at kdecook@familyservicerochester.org or phone at 507-287-2010.

Elder Network

Elder Network has programs and supports for residents of Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona County

- **Friendly visiting or Companionship**—currently offered over the phone. Set up with staff at Elder Network by calling 507-285-5272.

Family Service Rochester—Olmsted county

- Social and Friendly calls—matched with a volunteer to socialize weekly. Call 287-2010 to set up.

Pine Island Area Home Services

- Friendly calls—call 507-356-2999 to set up.

There are many other social supports in our region. Go to [www.helpoderadultsmin.org](http://www.helpoderadultsmin.org) to find out about other options near you or call the SLL at 1-800-333-2433.

NAMI has multiple programs that are one-on-one or group based that support your mental health.

- **Bring Your Own Lawn Chair (BYOLC)**—volunteer peer support is available to meet with you either on the phone or outside at a park with masks and physical distancing.

- **Connections Support Group**—currently meeting in-person at NAMI outside with masks and physical distancing.

- **Writing Group**—meets on-line once a week. Share writing prompts and then discuss together.

- **Wellness Recover Action Plan (WRAP)**—one-on-one wellness support meeting over the phone.

- **Wellness & Self**—tips and self care to help you stay well and incorporate more mindfulness.

Call NAMI at 507-287-1692 to find out more about any of these programs or receive additional support.
Are You a Medicare Beneficiary Struggling to Pay Your Medicare Costs?

There is help available! Call the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 to see if you might qualify for extra help.

Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) are federally funded programs administered by each individual state. These programs are for people with limited income and resources and help pay some or all of their Medicare premiums, deductibles, copayments and coinsurance. In some cases, Medicare Savings Programs may also pay Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments if you meet certain conditions. If your income is less than:

- $1,456 and assets less than $10,000 as a single person
- $1,960 and assets less than $18,000 as a couple, you may qualify.

There are three types of Medicare Savings Programs:

- Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)
- Service Limited Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)
- Qualified Individual (QI)

To apply for a Medicare Savings Program, complete a MN Health Care Programs Application for Certain Populations (DHS-3876). Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 to get an application, or more information.

Extra help with Medicare Prescription Drug costs, also known as Low Income Subsidy (LIS) is a federal program administered by Social Security to help with Part D costs. This program helps lower the premium, deductibles and copayments for drugs. If your income is below:

- $1,615 and assets less than $14,610 for a single person
- $2,175 and assets less than $29,160 for a couple, you may qualify.

Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 or apply online at https://secure.ssa.gov/i1020/start

AARP Age-friendly survey

There is still time to take the survey! AARP Minnesota is conducting a survey to gather ideas about what is needed to make the state more age-friendly and its community’s better places to live for everyone. The feedback will be analyzed by AARP for your consideration as the Council develops an action plan and proposes recommendations to the Governor. Allow yourself approximately 20-30 minutes to take the survey.

You may participate in the survey here (English and Spanish option) and distribute to staff, partners and stakeholders. It is now available in Somali and Hmong. Feel free to share with others. Your help in promoting this is much appreciated. Survey is live until July 31st.
Advanced Care Planning: Health Care Directive
Why do I need it?

Facing a pandemic has caused many of us to reassess our lives, and along with that, our health care wishes. Advanced care planning is not just about old age. At any age, a medical crisis could leave us too ill to make our own choices, as we have seen with COVID-19. If you were unable to speak for yourself, who would make decisions for you? What type of medical care would you want? Do you want CPR, mechanical ventilation, artificial hydration and nutrition?

An advanced directive is a legal document that goes into effect if you are incapacitated and unable to speak for yourself. It helps your family and medical staff know your values and desires related to your end-of-life care. This is not a fun topic to think about, plan for, or talk to your loved ones about, but extremely important. Having a conversation with your family before a crisis arrives, is a gift you can give them. It will help them make better decisions about your care if they are placed in a stressful, emotional situation.

There are many forms that you can use to create your health care directive in MN, but you do not have to use a form. The legal requirements include:

- Be in writing and dated
- State your name
- Signed by you when you can understand what you are signing.
- Have your signature verified by a notary, or two witnesses.
- Include an appointed agent to make your decisions and/or instructions on your wishes related to things like; life-sustaining treatment, where you want to receive care, who you want notified of your condition, and your feelings on organ donation, to name a few.

You can call the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 for resources, or use the following sites:

https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/Handbooks/Probate/CH6.asp MN Attorney General has a helpful Probate and Planning guide with information and forms.


https://www.honoringchoices.org/tools-resources/how-to-start Honoring Choices MN has a step-by step guide with fillable forms.

https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/regulation/infobulletins/advdir.html MN Department of Health has a question and answer page explaining the details of a health care directive.
Go to www.yourjuniper.org to see all of the on-line evidence based classes available around the state and in our region. Juniper class leaders continue to offer fall prevention programs like Tai Ji Quan, on-going exercise, Chronic disease management and Diabetes prevention and management classes virtually and anyone can sign up for a class happening anywhere in the state. Once you are registered they will help you get familiar and comfortable with the Zoom platform and spend some time “practicing” before the first session. There are a few classes like Stepping On and Matter of Balance that are not being offered virtually due to fidelity guidelines and safety of participants.

The WellConnect SE MN Partnership continues to focus on being a hub for evidence based programs in SE MN. Like all of us, WellConnect and it’s partnering organizations have had to make some adjustments to the programs during this time period. In an effort to reduce the risk to seniors, classes were paused or cancelled and plans for offering things virtually took shape. While not ideal, there are some positives. Participants can join from any location, you can still see and hear the instructor and may have some level of interaction depending on the delivery format, as well as staying safe at home. At this time the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program and SAIL, are being offered via a live Facebook stream. Others like CDSMP or Chronic pain have been offered via Zoom. Check the site to find out what is available and keep in mind this site is updated frequently so if you aren’t seeing much now, check back weekly for new options. Go to www.wellconnectsemn.org to learn more and click on “Find a Program Near You” to see what is available.

Look for the Aging Mastery Program on Juniper and WellConnect in the coming months. Participants 55+ will have the options to join a virtual workshop or may participate in a book club using the Aging Mastery Playbook included in the Starter Kit. This program focuses on helping older adults take charge of their health, renew healthy habits and make better choices. Go to the Juniper or WellConnect to see upcoming classes.
As we move into the fifth month of adjusting our lifestyles due to COVID-19 there may be new challenges or needs that arise for you or a loved one. There are numerous supports available in our region for families and older adults offering services such as meal delivery or curbside pick-up, grocery delivery, transportation, chore and telephone reassurance. If you are a senior or a family member looking for services for mom or dad during COVID-19, check out this site for up to date information about local supports near you. This site lists community based services and resources used by older adults and their caregivers in the state of MN. Search by categories like Chore & Homemaker, Grocery & Prescription delivery, Home Care and Health & Wellbeing to find options available near you. Go to HelpOlderAdultsMN.org to search for a service. If you are not able to use the internet or uncomfortable navigating this site please call the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433 and staff will do their best to help you find the services you need.