

Area Agency on Aging

Christi Christian,
Ombudsman Supervisor

Samantha Lankford,
Ombudsman Supervisor

Staci Mauney,
Planner

Stefanie Shields,
Accountant

Ada Vanderford,
Information Assistant

Aging Services

James Boyd,
Director



Case Management

Anita Martinez,
Supervisor

Joy Taylor,
Assistant Supervisor

Sara Calabro,
Assistant Supervisor

Penny Clark,
Case Manager

Beverly Courtney,
Case Manager

Pat Harris,
Case Manager

Amanda Lubbers,
Case Manager

Denice Sadler,
Case Manager

Casey Witvoet,
Case Coordinator

AGING

Actions

Spring/Summer 2010

Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma Provides More Funding

Earlier this year, the Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma again partnered with the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) Area Agency on Aging (AAA), along with other Area Agencies on Aging across the state, to assist with funding direct services for people 55 years of age and older. There was an application process for individuals 55 and over who were in need of some type assistance that was not otherwise provided by other agencies. These funds were used on a first come first serve basis until they were all utilized. Some of the types of services that were purchased by the SWODA AAA included dentures and/or dental work, minor home repairs, wheelchair ramps and heaters and/or heater repairs. Funding for each type of service was limited. Those with desperate or unique needs were encouraged to file an application because those situations were looked at on a case-by-case basis. Assistance will be available once per person every other year.

Counties covered by the SWODA AAA are Beckham, Custer, Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Roger Mills and Washita. The SWODA AAA has in-depth working knowledge of current government programs that are available to older Oklahomans, as well as knowledge of the existence of service gaps or non-covered needs of Oklahoma's older citizens.

The SWODA Aging Services Information Assistant receives calls daily from older people and/or their caregivers with needs, and many are told nothing is available to help. This Masonic funding enables AAA staff to assist many callers with resources that were not available previously. This funding "not only helps Oklahoma's older population, but also relieves some of the stress placed on caregivers whose older relatives are continually turned down because of the lack of resources needed to help," said James Boyd, SWODA director of Aging Services.



Members of the Oklahoma Area Agencies on Aging Association (O4A) accept a check from the Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma.

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The preparation of this newsletter is financed in part through a Title III Older Americans Act Grant from the Administration on Aging and the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. This publication, printed at the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority, is authorized by the Board of Trustees. 338 copies are being distributed at a cost of \$107.14. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. In compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, no person shall be excluded from participation, denied any benefits, or subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, or handicap. SWODA is an equal opportunity employer. This newsletter is provided as a communications tool to the elderly in the area.

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Respite Available from SWODA Aging Services

Many caregivers struggle to provide care for their loved ones on their own. The South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) believes it is important that caregivers know they are not alone in their struggle to help their loved ones. The SWODA AAA has a program that may benefit many caregivers in southwestern Oklahoma.

The SWODA AAA provides for respite services for eligible caregivers in partnership with the Department of Human Services, Aging Services Division, and the Oklahoma Respite Resource Network (ORRN).

Caregivers are defined as "people of any age caring for someone 60 years of age or older with two Activities of Daily Living impairments (dressing, bathing, eating, transferring, toileting, or walking) and/or requiring substantial assistance due to a cognitive or other mental impairment." Also served are grandparents 55 years of age or older who care for grandchildren, step-grandchildren, or children related by blood or marriage and who live with the child, serve as primary caregiver, and have a legal relationship with the child (custody, guardianship or raising child informally). The child must be no older than eighteen years.

Studies have shown that caregivers will give better care, maintain their own health, and have reduced levels of stress if they can get away from the responsibilities of providing care even if for only a few hours. Respite does just that. It provides a way for a caregiver to get out of the everyday routine of caring for their loved one. For example, a caregiver has the option of using respite services to go to a doctor's appointment, get their hair done, visit friends at a coffee shop, or even go to a movie.

To apply for respite services, a caregiver should call SWODA AAA's Information Assistant, Ada Vanderford, at 1-800-627-4882. If the caregiver qualifies, they will receive \$400 worth of vouchers. The caregiver can then contract with any person of their choice (other than someone living in the same home or under 18 years old) to provide respite services. There are no income or resource limitations.

A registry of respite providers is maintained by the SWODA Area Agency on Aging to be given to caregivers who cannot find a respite provider on their own. The respite providers on this list have successfully passed an OSBI background check and completed an orientation packet before being placed on the respite provider list. In addition, SWODA AAA checks four references given by each respite provider candidate. Those who are interested in being placed on this registry should contact SWODA AAA at 1-800-627-4882 or e-mail SWODA's Information Assistant at ada@swoda.org.

New Ombudsman Volunteers Certified by SWODA AAA

The South Western Oklahoma Development Authority Area Agency on Aging Ombudsman Program has recently certified new ombudsman volunteers in the eight-county area. Louise Kenedy, Weatherford, volunteers at Alterra Assisted Living in Weatherford. Pat Allen, Altus, volunteers at English Village Manor in Altus, and Camilla Jackson, Altus, volunteers at Plantation Village Assisted Living Center in Altus.

Ombudsman volunteers visit residents of their assigned facility a minimum of two hours per week and attend one monthly meeting in their area to meet the state continuing education requirements. Ombudsman volunteers continue to be needed in Clinton, Clinton Veteran's Center, Cordell, Elk City, Sayre and Erick. More information may be obtained by contacting Christi Christian, RN, or Samantha Lankford, SWODA ombudsman supervisors, at (580) 821-0153/821-4068, by email at christi@swoda.org/sjones@swoda.org or by writing to P.O. Box 304, Sentinel, OK 73664. The ombudsman supervisor is available, by appointment, to speak to your group or organization about the ombudsman program and other topics related to care of the elderly.

Masonic Fraternity of Oklahoma Provides More Funding

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All Masonic funding for 2010 has been allocated, so potential applicants should check with the SWODA AAA in January 2011 to find out if more funding has been received for this program. To learn more about this and other available services, call the SWODA Aging Services Information Assistant, Ada Vanderford, at 1-800-627-4882, or call the statewide toll-free Senior Info Line at 1-800-211-2116.

SWODA AAA Celebrates Older Americans Month 2010

May is Older Americans Month, a tradition dating back to 1963 to honor the legacies and ongoing contributions of older Americans and provide support to them as they enter the next stage in life. South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is joining communities nationwide in celebrating this month with special activities and events.

This year's Older Americans Month theme – *Age Strong! Live Long!* – recognizes the diversity and vitality of today's older Americans who span three generations. The annual commemoration of Older Americans Month is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of older citizens and join them in providing services and support that empower the elderly. Americans of all ages and backgrounds can volunteer with programs that improve health literacy, increase access to quality health services, offer food and nutrition services, provide financial and housing counseling, sponsor social activities and community engagement and more. For more information, contact the SWODA AAA Information Assistant at 1-800-627-4882.

