



Georgia Gerontology Society conference introduces hybrid model to its attendees

The 2021 Georgia Gerontology Society Annual Conference took place in August and featured a hybrid model with in-person and online presentations from members of Georgia’s aging network, awarded exemplary employees and honored late advocate Pat King.

Conference presenters from Georgia’s aging network included Temitope Walker, Senior Hunger Nutrition Coordinator for DAS; Melanie McNeil, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman; and Kimberly Rodgers, Aging Communications and Outreach Specialist for the Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging.

Their covered topics included perspectives of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for seniors, navigating facility lockdown during COVID and advocating for isolated long-term care residents and person-centered care and family support for dementia caregivers

AAA staff win awards for exemplary service

Public Guardianship Office (PGO) Supervisor **Deanna Mosley** was awarded the Elsie Alvis Award at



PGO Supervisor Deanna Mosley (left) is awarded the Elsie Alvis Award at the 2021 Georgia Gerontology Society conference.

the Georgia Gerontology Society annual conference. The Elsie Alvis Award is given to an outstanding professional in the aging field with a minimum of 15 years of service.

PGO Manager Carleton Coleman presented the award to Mosley and spoke about Mosley’s dedication to her clients and advocacy for the aging and disabled. Coleman mentioned how she has purchased items for clients out of her own pocket and taken clients out to lunch.

“This work is in our heart,” Mosley said. “I knew at 13 that I wanted to be a social worker. I appreciate our public guardianship team and people that care about our seniors and disabled adults.”

Middle Georgia AAA Lead Case Manager **Benae Hogan** was awarded the Dan Hickman Award at the conference. The Dan Hickman Award is presented to a person who has shown excellence in the profession of care/case management and exhibits leadership in the profession.

The award was established in 1998 and first presented in 1999 in memory of Dan, who was the DAS Community Care Services Program (CCSP) Manager.

He helped define case management as a profession in Georgia, and he exhibited great spirit in support of the profession. DAS Livable Communities Team Lead Thom Snyder presented Hogan with her award and spoke about her 10+ years with the Middle Georgia AAA.

He also noted her proficiency and care for her clients and said one distinguishing aspect about Hogan is her humility and willingness to help others. Recently, Hogan was selected as a Community Champion for Mom’s Meals.

“Any caseworker in the state is as deserving of this

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award,” Hogan said. “I would like to accept this award in **Tanesha Thomas’** memory.”

Tanesha Thomas was an Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) Program Manager in Middle Georgia.

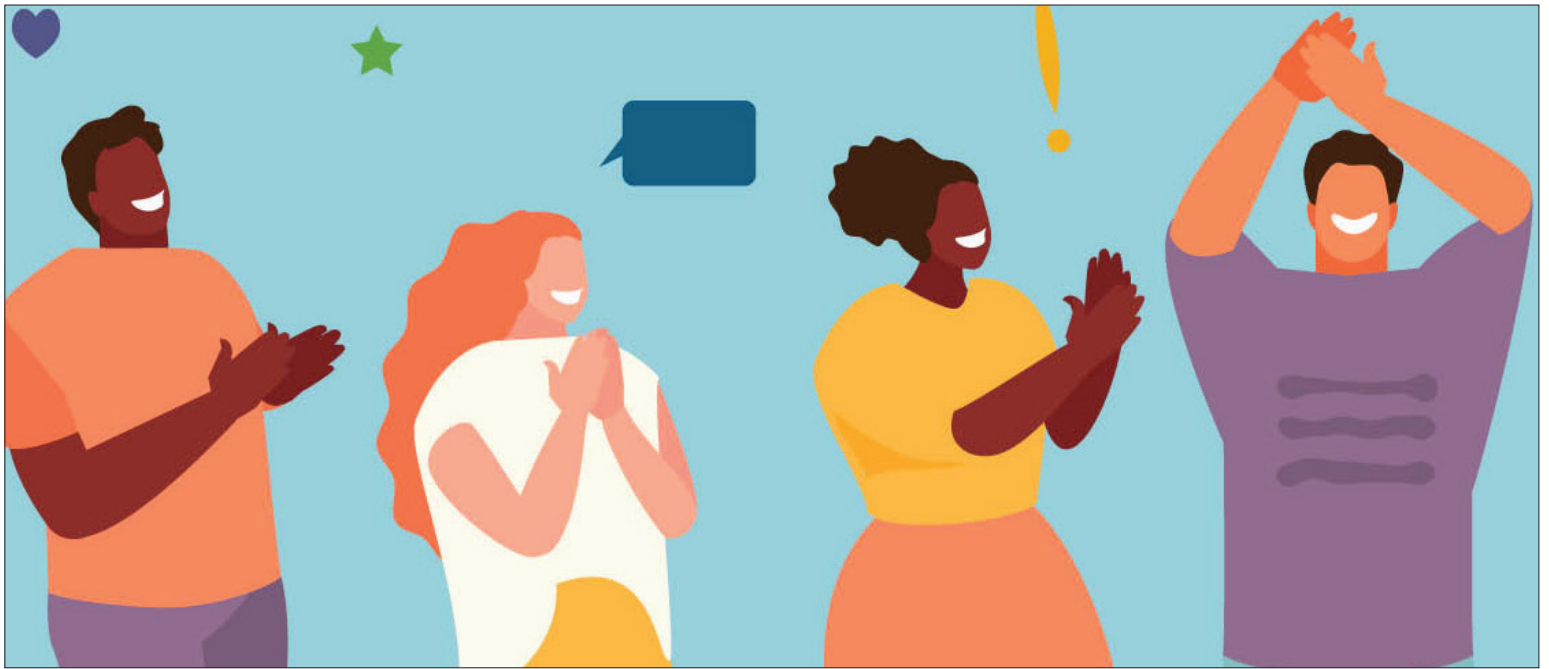
Tanesha was tragically killed on July 12 of this year. She joined the Middle Georgia AAA in July 2014 as an ADRC Counselor and served as the ADRC Program Manager for the past three and a half years.

Read more about Hogan’s award [here](#).

Georgia Council on Aging Executive Director **Kathy Floyd** was awarded the Kay Hind Change Agent Award. The Kay Hind Change Agent Award, established in 2017, is presented to an individual who is a driving force in creating change that improves the lives of older adults in Georgia.

Floyd was recognized by the Society for her efforts in helping Georgia’s seniors through her legislative work.

Staff Shoutouts



DAS Chief Dietitian talks about Georgia programs at national conference in Oct.

DAS Chief Dietitian **Renae Brown** presented at the Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo on October 18. This is a national conference for registered dietitians with approximately 3,000 attendees.

Her presentation focused on programs and policies that address diversity, equity and inclusion for older adults.

The Division of Aging Services is proud to brag about our great work in Georgia on a national stage!

Adult Protective Services recognizes star employees

This month, APS is highlighting two of its newest supervisors, **Cheryl Bryant** and **Amanda Johnson**.

Cheryl is the supervisor of the Middle Valley River Region, and Amanda is the supervisor of the Metro Newnan Region.

They have both taken on the challenge of starting new units from

scratch. Johnson manages a unit of six case managers in six counties. Johnson has done an excellent job preparing herself and her unit for new adventures.

Bryant manages five case managers in nine counties. She has taken on cases herself in an effort to provide relief to her unit.

Both supervisors have managed to balance moving from a case manager role into a supervisory role, while ensuring their staff needs are met and that our most vulnerable clients are being served properly.

Dakota Wright is an APS investigator from the Northwest Georgia APS team. She always offers to assist her colleagues and has been doing outstanding work building bridges with law enforcement and reporters in her area.

She recently had a case with a client who was cognitively impaired and had been abused and abandoned by her caregiver.

The client was alone and did not

remember to eat and had no way to meet her own needs. Dakota connected with local law enforcement to ensure the client received the help she needed. Way to go, Dakota!

Emily Shook and her team from **District A** received a compliment from a local police officer.

The officer said that APS was the best agency he worked with for investigations, even among all the other agencies.

Chandra Dixon is one of two lead workers in APS Central Intake. In Central Intake, specialists work statewide to input reports from mandated reporters and the community on abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with disabilities and older adults.

Chandra has provided excellent customer service to internal and external customers.

She ensures all necessary information is included on intake forms so investigators have the details needed to complete an investigation.

Sowega Council on Aging breaks down walls and forges new paths to continue serving seniors during pandemic

Sowega Council on Aging is the first Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in Georgia to operate under the Senior Center Without Walls model. The brick-and-mortar operation of the traditional senior center model is a thing of the past, as the COVID pandemic has forced AAAs to evaluate how to serve seniors at a distance. While programs and activities are no longer taking place within the traditional senior center four walls, distance programming has become the new normal for engaging seniors across the 14-county region.

Many were skeptical at first. Transitioning to a new model and serving seniors in a completely different way than had ever been done before has certainly come with its challenges. However, Sowega Council on Aging has turned these challenges into amazing opportunities to serve more people, expand partnerships and community support and engage clients in new ways.

Previously, clients congregated in a senior center building for a meal which only allowed a limited number of clients to be served. Now, Sowega is partnering with over 20 restaurants in the region to ensure these clients get the same quality of nutrition they were getting before the pandemic. Clients are able to go to a restaurant in their county and pick up a hot meal which has shown to have a significant appeal. The AAA went from serving an average of 500 clients in the traditional senior center model to serving over 1,400 clients in the new model.

Without having a physical location for clients to congregate, programs and activities were next on the list to address. Many clients reported how

much they missed their friends from the center. So, teleconference lines were designated for each county, and clients were encouraged to call in to speak with each other during scheduled activities called Coffee Connections. Games such as Bingo were other activities that were sorely missed. Other programming options were Wellness Wednesdays and Brain Food Conference Calls, where they address nutrition, lifestyle management and disease prevention. Often, these calls are led by guest presenters in areas of their expertise.

Attending group exercise classes was something that many people took for granted when it was easily accessible in the senior center. However, as in-person classes were canceled, many clients began to notice a decline in their physical health. It was also noted they missed the mental benefits gained from exercise. To overcome the barrier of having no equipment at home, all clients were mailed two exercise bands, an exercise CD and a step counter to wear on their wrist. In addition, the Wellness Program manager filmed a variety of exercise workouts and posted them to the Sowega Council on Aging YouTube channel. Classes were also filmed live on Facebook. And when it was deemed safe to do so, clients were more than happy to return to in-person classes and walking groups that were offered outdoors.

When work was forced to be done remotely, the assumption was made that seniors would not be eager to participate in virtual programs. The Sowega Council on Aging found just the opposite to be true. In April of 2021, they piloted two virtual Tai Chi programs and supplied the



Seniors are able to stay connected to their senior centers by participating in workshops and exercise classes using the 25 Claris tablets purchased by the Sowega Council on Aging.

participants with laptops and hot spots that allowed them to participate in Zoom sessions.

The Sowega Council on Aging ultimately decided to purchase 25 Claris Companion tablets and an annual data plan for each device. These tablets will go to 25 lucky clients who enroll in a minimum of two virtual evidence-based workshops.

To date, 14 clients have already received their tablets and training on how to them to participate in either a virtual Tai Chi for Arthritis workshop or a Chronic Disease Self-Management workshop.

Clients will get to keep these devices for a full year, and it will enable them to participate in many other virtual programs, allow them access to websites and online games and interact with family and friends from the comfort of their homes.

Area Agencies on Aging

River Valley Agency on Aging draws big crowd for giveaway

There was a purpose to that long line of cars that stretched through the Columbus Historic District on August 6. This was about food. The fresh fruits and vegetables that we all crave this time of summer.

The River Valley Agency on Aging held its annual end-of-summer fresh produce giveaway at its office on Front Avenue downtown. It was also sponsored by the Georgia Department of Public Health and the state Department of Agriculture. "Every year at the end of the season we do a big one here in our parking lot where anybody over the age of 60 can come through," Katie Howard, the Director of River Valley Agency on Aging. "This year, because of the pandemic we are able to give 24 dollars' worth of fruits and vegetables. Usually, it's 20 dollars." The peaches, greens, corn and everything else drew a crowd. More than 800 people were served and it and created a line of vehicles down Seventh Street almost to Veterans Parkway. "Usually because of Social Security, people think seniors have got it made," Howard said. "The Social Security is not even enough to pay rent, much less buy healthy food."

"A lot of people are out of work because of COVID," Columbus resident Robert Mckie said. "Fixed income just don't go as far as it used to." Vera Degourville, also of Columbus, agreed. "I need it," she said. "I am on a fixed income." Columbus resident Joe King knew exactly what he was going to do with the food when he got home. "Sir, my old lady can cook," King said. "Collard greens, she knows what to do. And them baked sweet potatoes. Sir, look, I eat. And then it's free. And we ain't got a whole lot of money."

-Chuck Williams, WRBL, Columbus



Participants shop at the Sowega farmers market

Sowega AAA farmers market encourages healthy habits

The Georgia Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program encourages healthy eating by making fresh, Georgia-grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs available to eligible participants at approved market sites from June through September each year. The United States Department of Agriculture provides funding for these Farmers Markets. This season, the Sowega AAA partnered with two regional farmers at over 12 markets, serving a total of 690 seniors across the Southwest Georgia region.

NE Georgia AAA helps clients maintain their independence

In July, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission - Area Agency on Aging (NEGRC-AAA) Assistive Technology lab donated a walker with wheels (rollator) to a 64-year-old client in Newton County. The client was in the hospital due to fluid on his body. He reported that he had been previously hospitalized due to a fall in which he bumped his head while he was in the bathroom.

The client reported that when he returned home, he was unsure of himself and did not feel safe while walking through his home. Also, the client reported heart problems which led to him getting tired easily. He repeatedly said he wanted to maintain

his independence as long as he could but felt like he needed some support.

The client and Assistive Technology Specialist Toshia Lewis discussed his needs. He felt as though the rollator would be the best equipment for him. Lewis provided a socially distanced demonstration of the rollator to ensure he knew where the brakes were and how to lock the brakes when needed. The client was very appreciative.

The next day the client called and stated that the rollator improved his quality of life instantly. He reported that he felt safe again in his home, and now he can even go outside. In addition, the client said he no longer worries about falling as he knows that he can sit down when he's tired or feels his legs getting weak. For more on assistive technology, contact 1-800-474-7540.

Caregivers are honored during Kinship Care Month in Sept.

This September, DHS honored kinship caregivers. Kinship care refers to a temporary or permanent arrangement in which a relative or any non-relative adult who has a long-standing relationship or bond with the child and/or family has taken over the full-time, substitute care of a child whose parents are unable or unwilling to do so. Kinship care includes those relationships established through an informal arrangement, legal custody, guardianship order, a relative foster care placement or kinship adoption.

Grandparents raising grandchildren were highlighted on the DHS website and social media as important kinship caregivers. Caregivers like Katherine West talked about the call she received that changed her life. [Read her story here:](#) Grandmother steps up after a life-changing call | Georgia Department of Human Services.

Area Agencies on Aging

DHS honors residents during Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month observed in October

Every October, DHS observes Long-Term Care Residents' Rights Month with the Georgia Ombudsman program. We honored residents living in long-term care facilities and those receiving services in their homes and community by providing resources available to residents and their families. The Georgia Long-Term Care Ombudsman team works to advocate for improved quality of life for residents in long-term care facilities.

DAS hosts Light Up the Holidays, an annual holiday gift drive for vulnerable adults

Kicking off this October, Light Up the Holidays in an annual campaign to match vulnerable adults under Public Guardianship with gift donors. Unfortunately, many of these older Georgians and adults with disabilities are easily forgotten and may not receive a gift during the holidays. If you would like to sponsor a person under guardianship or receive more information about the program, please contact Jennifer Hogan at jennifer.hogan@dhs.ga.gov.



Webinars

Hosted by the Georgia Department of Human Services

Ask a Medicare Counselor

Join the conversation **every Tuesday** at 1 p.m. when a GeorgiaCares counselor will answer your Medicare questions.

October 19 1-1:30 p.m.	November 30 1-1:30 p.m.
October 26 1-1:30 p.m.	December 7 1-1:30 p.m.
November 2 1-1:30 p.m.	December 14 1-1:30 p.m.
November 9 1-1:30 p.m.	December 21 1-1:30 p.m.
November 16 1-1:30 p.m.	December 28 1-1:30 p.m.
November 23 1-1:30 p.m.	

Register now!

GeorgiaCares
Local help for people with Medicare



Webinars

Hosted by the Georgia Department of Human Services

New to Medicare Bootcamp

Join us for a free webinar on **November 4** and **December 2**. A certified Medicare counselor from GeorgiaCares will present valuable information.

Register now!

GeorgiaCares
Local help for people with Medicare

GeorgiaCares kicks off Medicare open enrollment in October with webinars, counseling sessions, health plans & more

October 15 to December 7 is when all people with Medicare can change their Medicare health plans and

prescription drug coverage for the following year to better meet their needs. Beginning October 15, DHS will spotlight the importance of reviewing Medicare coverage and provide counseling services and webinars to ensure the best coverage. GeorgiaCares is administered through the Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services.

Visit aging.ga.gov or call toll-free 1-866-552-4464 (option 4) to speak to a certified Medicare counselor.

GeorgiaCares Ask A Medicare Counselor sessions take place every Tuesday at 1 p.m. For a list of sessions and to register, visit here.

The New to Medicare Bootcamp sessions take place on November 4 and December 2. To register, visit here. For more information about GeorgiaCares, please visit mygeorgiacares.org.



Various observances are happening in Nov.: DAS hosts National Family Caregivers Month

Every November, DHS observes National Family Caregivers Month. The theme for 2021 is #CaregiverAnd, which honors caregivers who also have other jobs outside of caregiving. All month long, DHS Will focus on tips and tools to help families cope with challenges that may arise during emergencies and changes of circumstances.

At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics Certification Course (CACTS) hosts upcoming webinar

Nov. 9 & 10, 2021, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m. An At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics Specialist is a professional trained in recognizing and responding to the abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable adults. An Adult Crime Tactics (ACT) Certified Specialist is knowledgeable in identifying at-risk adult abuse, understands the different types of abuse, the role of adult protective services and how to identify available resources. The ACT training is not open to the general public. Applicants must be first responders or in a field of work that requires mandated reporting of vulnerable adult abuse. To register for this training, email david.blake@dhs.ga.gov or anna.thomas1@dhs.ga.gov.