

THE ADVOCATE

Service Navigation for Low-Income Seniors Project Launched with Major Grant from the MCHRC

Frederick Health Hospital, Advocates for the Aging of Frederick County, and the Housing Authority of the City of Frederick are partners in a new project focused on maintaining the health of low-income seniors and enabling them to stay in their homes safely and securely.

Funded through a major grant from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (MCHRC), significant local funding from the Community Foundation of Frederick County, the Delaplaine Foundation, and Advocates for the Aging, and in-kind support from Frederick Health and the Housing Authority, the 2-year research and direct service program will enroll 100 seniors living in rental housing with subsidized support of Section 8, Housing Choice Vouchers.



L to R: AAFC Board President Melanie Cox, FH VP Heather Kirby, Project Service Coordinator Kayla Reese and Sara Littleton, Manager of FH's Care Transitions Program

The goals of the program are to:

- create and implement a service coordination model for low-income seniors living in single-unit housing,
- to effectively utilize local health, transportation, housing and social services to reduce participants' use of emergency services,
- to reduce low-acuity visits to the hospital emergency department,
- to be proactive in addressing health and social needs of low-income seniors,

Service Navigation for Low-Income Seniors Project, continued

- and to gather data on how to best serve the broader continuum of Frederick County's low-income seniors in the years ahead.

The project also partners with Frederick County Emergency Medical Services, Transit and Senior Services, the Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) program at the Frederick County Health Department, Habitat for Humanity, and other service providers.

Launched in the midst of the pandemic, the project took on special urgency as seniors were isolated at home to avoid exposure to COVID-19 and were cut off from support systems. As the pandemic continues, project staff are engaging with clients to mitigate social isolation, ensure food security and home safety.

Project Service Coordinator Kayla Reese completed her certification through the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) in fall 2020 and immediately began working with Project co-directors Melanie Cox, RN, President of the AAFC Board, and Heather Kirby, VP of Integrated Care Delivery and Chief Population Health Officer at Frederick Health, Kandy Alexander, Section 8 Lead for Senior Residents at the Housing Authority, and Sara Littleton, Frederick Health's Care Transitions Program. to begin implementing the project. Sonja _____, Community Health Worker for the project, came on board earlier this year. The project also has staff support from RNs through Frederick Health's Chronic Care Management/Home Health Services Program.

In addition to providing much needed service coordination, the project is the first in Frederick County to gather data on low-income seniors across a spectrum of social determinants of health as well as physical, mental, emotional and behavioral health needs and desired supports and look at them from the larger view of population health.

A critical component of the project is the multi-sector advisory board that meets monthly with project staff to review data and activities, offer critique and ideas. Advisory board members are:

Joanne Lynn, MD, Director, Center for Elder Care and Advanced Studies, Altarum Institute

Dana French, Captain, US Navy (Retired) and Organizational Development Consultant

Atchutha Geetha Chilakamarri, MD, Supportive and Geriatric Care, Frederick Health

Matthew Burgan, Paramedic, Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Services and Mobile Community Health

Deborah Horton, RN, Specialty in Gerontology

Diane Grove, RN, Director, Frederick County AERS Program

Kathy Schey, Director, Frederick County Senior Services Division

Tiffany Kendall, Frederick County Transit

Monica Bearden, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Frederick County Government

Sarah Kingman Matthews, Social Worker with specialty in Gerontology

Mary Beachley, RN, Nursing Faculty, Shepherd University

Advocates for the Aging Announces Major Endowment Gift

AERS Fund Named in Honor of Donald L. Lewis

Advocates for the Aging of Frederick County (AAFC) has received a major charitable gift from the estate of the late Donald L. Lewis, former county commissioner and mayor of Thurmont. The gift establishes an endowment for Advocates at the Community Foundation of Frederick County.



Mr. Lewis, a WWII veteran who was in the first wave of soldiers ashore in the D-Day invasion of Normandy and a Purple Heart recipient, passed away in 2018 at the age of 99. A well-known businessman in Thurmont who served as Thurmont's mayor from 1964 to 1970, he was then elected to two terms as a Frederick County commissioner. He and his wife Freda were strong supporters of local charities, service clubs and conservancy organizations during their lifetimes. After Mrs. Lewis's death, Don Lewis honored her memory with a gift naming the physical and occupational therapy wing of Frederick

County's new Citizens Care & Rehabilitation Center. He also created an endowment fund at the Community Foundation to support continuing education for Citizens' staff members.

The income earned on the endowment funded through the Lewis gift to Advocates will help support the organization's overall activities on behalf of Frederick County's poorest and frailest seniors. In recognition of Mr. Lewis's investment in the care and support of vulnerable seniors, AAFC has named one of its targeted programs in his honor, establishing **The Donald L. Lewis Fund for the Frederick County AERS Program**. Created in 2017, this fund supports the needs of low-income elderly clients of the county's Adult Evaluation and Referral Services (AERS) program at the Frederick County Health Department that cannot be met through regular sources, and that are deemed to improve a client's quality of life/and or health and well-being. Over the last two years, the fund has assisted with the purchase of a variety of services and

supports, including a prosthetic limb, an electric wheelchair, safety alert systems and smaller needs, such as an alarm clock, shoes,

a vacuum and other items enabling seniors to age in place. Charitable gifts to the Lewis Fund provide this support.

Improving Geriatric Care at Frederick Health

Committed to expanding best practices in senior health care, AAFC is looking forward to continuing its partnership with Frederick Health (formerly FMH) as the pandemic recedes by once again providing scholarships to hospital and primary care staff for the Edmund G. Beachum Current Topics in Geriatrics Seminar sponsored by Johns Hopkins Division of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology.



For the last two years, the seminar was held in a virtual format, and reallocation of staff to essential pandemic-related patient care precluded any FH participation. In 2019, seven FH staff attended the program. Of those participants, four were present for the photo above: (l to r): Megan Putman, PA, Melanie Cox, AAFC Board President, Kelly Llewellyn, FNP, Jackie Dinterman, Case Management Manager, the late Charlie Trunk, AAFC Board Treasurer, Patricia Cash, Pharm.D., Care Transition Pharmacist, Dianne Lewis, AAFC Board and Dr. Joseph Berman, AAFC Board. Also attending the 2019 program were Dr. Margaret Oberman, Dr. Jayant Patatankar and Malathi Kahani, PA.

The annual event provides “scientifically-based practical, clinical talks focused on improving the health care of individual seniors,” according to the conference directors. Over three days, participants attend presentations, panel discussions and a series of clinical case sessions.

AAFC was delighted to support these medical professionals interested in geriatric care continuing education. Our collaboration includes their willingness to come back and share their knowledge with colleagues at FMH through in-house education and training.

Fall Prevention Project Gains Traction

The AAFC Board of Directors ended 2020 with a renewed commitment to answer the need for grab bars and mobility supports for low-income seniors as part of the effort to minimize falls and their resulting injuries that too often cause suffering, early death and tremendous financial costs.

The CDC tells us that one out of every four older adults falls each year – but less than half tell their doctor. Each year, more than 3 million American seniors are treated in emergency rooms after a fall, and over 800,000 are hospitalized because of a fall injury.

(continued on page 5)

Fall Prevention Project Gains Traction, continued

Frederick County’s Mobile Community Healthcare Program (MCH), staffed by specially trained paramedics and a registered nurse from Frederick Health, visits seniors at home for medical assessments and home safety checks. Matthew Burgan, EMS paramedic and MCH director, made the point to AAFC that few of the senior clients they visit have grab bars or other supports in the bathroom or other rooms of their homes. When visiting paramedics point out this need, seniors are quick to agree to the need and then ask the question: “Will you come back and put them in for me?”

Purchasing and correctly installing the correct grab bars and supports can be a significant expense for low-income seniors, but the cost pales in light of the human and financial costs of falls. The CDC says that in 2015, the total medical cost of falls was \$50 billion – and Medicare and Medicaid were billed for 75% of the costs. And once a senior falls, even if uninjured, the odds of another fall are great, and the fear of that can lead to less activity and, in turn, less mobility and the increased potential for falling.

AAFC has some experience in providing grab bars through our AERS Fund supporting the needs of AERS clients not covered through other programs or insurance. In 2021, AAFC will seek funding to implement a new Grab Bar Project, where AAFC will pay for the purchase and professional installation of supports for individuals who have been assessed through the MCH and AERS Programs and our joint service navigation project with Frederick Health and the Housing Authority.

2020 Lewis Fund Activity

The Lewis Fund supports unfunded needs of clients served by the Adult Evaluation and Review Services (AERS) program of the Frederick County Health Department.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AERS nurses and social workers were reassigned to other immediate needs throughout the Health Department in 2020, including services to nursing homes and COVID testing. Minimized services to AERS clients went virtual, and that lack of hands-on, in-home contact meant that requests to the Lewis Fund were greatly reduced. The Lewis Fund paid for a total of \$9,679.36 in purchases and services over the year for personal and household equipment, utility and rent costs, in-home support and medical expenses.

As the county comes out of the pandemic in 2021 and the AERS program regains momentum, we anticipate renewed requests for support.

Gifts & Grants

Thank you to our generous donors. Gifts to AAFC support the needs of low-income and frail seniors in Frederick County.

Ausherman Family Foundation
Community Foundation of Frederick County, MD, Inc.
William E. Cross Foundation, Inc.
The Delaplaine Foundation, Inc.

The Frederick Mutual Insurance Donor-Advised Fund of the Community Foundation of
Frederick County

The Donald Lewis Community Impact Fund for Advocates for the Aging
Anonymous #1
Anonymous #2

Advocates for the Aging of Frederick County, Maryland

Board of Directors and Officers:

Melanie Cox, President

Cynthia Powell, Vice President

Kay Sheiss, Treasurer

RaeAnn Butler, Secretary

Karl Bickel, Director

Deborah Horton, Director

Sarah Matthews, Director

Katie Hemler, Director

Joseph Berman, MD, Director Emeritus

PO Box 3625

Frederick MD 21705

www.advocatesforaging.org

Advocates for the Aging of Frederick County holds public meetings bi-monthly throughout the year at the Frederick County Health Department Large Meeting Room, 340 Montevue Lane, Frederick MD 21702

Board meetings are held bi-monthly at locations announced prior to the meeting.