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**Anne Arundel County  
Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council  
2024 Annual Report**

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**Steuart Pittman, County Executive**

Karrisa Kelly, Director of the Department of Aging and Disabilities (DoAD)

Russell Jones, Chair AAA Advisory Council

Angela Mickalide, Vice-Chair AAA Advisory Council

January 31, 2025

**Voting Members**

Annapolis Senior Activity Center - Shirley Norlem  
Arnold Senior Activity Center - Mary Ann Yarbrough  
Brooklyn Park Senior Activity Center - Ettice Patton  
O'Malley Senior Activity Center - Kathy McNally  
Pasadena Senior Activity Center - Vacant  
Pascal Senior Activity Center - Jamarri Bright  
Severn Senior Activity Center - Vacant  
South County Senior Activity Center - Russell Jones  
Public Member at Large - Angela Mickalide  
Public Member at Large, Our Futures Past - Jordan Derby

**Department Members**

Karrisa Kelly - Director, Department of Aging and Disabilities  
Joelle Ridgeway – Deputy Director, Department of Aging and Disabilities  
Brandi Francis – Assistant Director, Disability and Community Services  
Sarah Stein - Assistant Director, Aging and Disability Resource Center/Long Term Care  
Kelly Mackall - Public Information Officer, Department of Aging and Disabilities  
Heidi Howard - Executive Assistant to Karrisa Kelly, Director

## **Introduction**

The year 2024 has been a year of continuing membership expansion and programmatic innovation. The Anne Arundel County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council has been meeting in person and has offered a hybrid option via Zoom. Throughout the year, our focus has been supporting our activity centers and communicating priorities and initiatives to the Department of Aging and Disabilities (DoAD) and other county partners during this time. Many positive changes and key initiatives have come from these priorities to benefit the older adult population in the county. All members of the council take great pride in advocating for the enrichment of the lives of older adults in the county and strive to meet County Executive Steuart Pittman's vision to Make Anne Arundel County - The Best Place For All.

## **Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council**

The Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council (AAAAC) is pleased to submit its 2024 Annual Report. The Older Americans Act of 1965 (Sec 1321.57) requires that each Area Agency on Aging (AAA) have an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council's purpose is to serve in an advisory capacity to the DoAD and the county executive, which will further the county's and area agency's mission of developing and coordinating community-based systems of services for all older persons in the planning and service area.

With the exception of July and August, the Advisory Council meets monthly on the third Friday at 10:00 am in the Independence Conference Room at the Heritage Office Complex, 2664 Riva Road, Suite 170, Annapolis, MD. These meetings have been offered via Zoom to promote a hybrid option.

Advisory Council members represent a cross-section of the county's diverse population, both culturally and geographically. Names of prospective members are forwarded to the county executive for appointment to a four-year, coterminous term. The Advisory Council does not provide direct services to older adults, but several of its members also volunteer at local senior activity centers and represent the department in their respective centers, as well as at large departmental events throughout the county.

## **Representing the Interests of Older Adults in Anne Arundel County**

- The Advisory Council supported the opening of the new Severn Senior Activity Center. This is the first-of-its-kind community center in our county to benefit the intergenerational population in the Severn area. Connected to the senior activity center is a gym and a Boys and Girls Club. The senior activity center is equipped with a state-of-the-art fitness equipment room, aerobics room, craft room, and billiards room. There is a large multipurpose room and community room available for the public to use for events for people of all ages. This is the first center in the county to be open from 8 am to 8 pm, seven days a week. There were a total of 776 new members added in 2024

and almost 40,000 individuals consisting of center members and individuals from the public visited the centers in 2024.

- Older Americans Month 2024 was celebrated at the Pip Moyer Recreation Center. This year's celebration hosted nearly 300 participants from the public. County Executive Pittman was joined by the Maryland Department of Aging Secretary Roques and the City of Annapolis Mayor Buckley who gave remarks. Entertainment was provided by the South County Senior Activity Center's Showstoppers and the Annapolis Jazz Ensemble. Tai Chi demonstrations, speed friending, and other social games were provided.
- The county executive has continued his promise to invest in the senior activity centers by approving the capital project request to renovate and expand the Arnold Senior Activity Center. The Advisory Council and center members advocated to secure renovation and construction which will tentatively begin in January 2025. A partnership with the Anne Arundel Community College was secured and programming and activities were seamlessly moved to the Annex A and the Johnson Building located on the campus.
- The Department of Aging and Disabilities continued the partnership with Governor Moore's Service Year Option program for its inception year to mentor three young adults so they could gain career skills to succeed in their future. The department had successfully finished the first year of this program and is continuing with another young adult for the second year. She is currently working at Pascal Senior Activity Center with programming and activities geared toward older adults.
- South County Senior Activity Center held a community engagement event in partnership with Healthy Anne Arundel. Exhibitors from the Department of Health and Department of Aging and Disabilities promoted healthy living by hosting line dancing and giving out valuable information about healthy eating and habits.
- Advisory Council members attended to represent the council at the annual DisAbility Awareness Day hosted by the DoAD and the Commission on Disability Issues (CODI). This year's event was held in person in the Severn Center gym and offered over 20 exhibitors and entertainment to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The county executive helped CODI to recognize businesses and individuals who help improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.
- Council members were asked to give comments and recommendations on legislation during the 2024 session. Some of the bills they were asked to comment on include nutrition assistance, genetic testing, continuing care retirement communities, elder fraud, and veterans affairs.
- The Advisory Council provided input to the Area Plan Survey, which is required by the state. The Council formulated valuable questions for public input. The survey was

conducted in May and received over 1,300 responses. The results revealed issues with food and housing insecurity and transportation concerns.

- Innovative programs and activities continue to be offered at the senior activity centers. Some new initiatives that have been a direct result of the advocacy of the council members include:
  - Grief Counseling
  - Fire Extinguishing
  - Vision and Hearing Screenings
  - Health Promotions
  - Evidence Based Programming
  - Scam Prevention/Education
  - AACC Classes (in person and virtual)
  - A/V carts
  - CPR classes offered to members in coordination with the Anne Arundel County Fire Department and the Office of Emergency Management.
  - Flu vaccination clinics offered at the centers in coordination with the Anne Arundel County Department of Health.
  - Lunch & Learn events, Healthy Habits and Fresh Conversations presentations offering healthy food options and nutrition education to cover fall prevention, smoking cessation, lung and other cancers, chronic disease management, food nutrition importance and benefits, and much more.
- Council members and the DoAD work closely with each other to prioritize key objectives for the needs of older adults in the county. Some of these objectives that the DoAD has coordinated and implemented are:
  - A Veteran's Benefits Navigator was hired to assist veterans with their benefits and build supportive partnerships to streamline this process.
  - Continuing a partnership with the Senior Dog Sanctuary to offer free pet food and pet wellness clinics to promote affordability so older adult pet owners may keep their pets in their homes.

- o Working with Free State Justice LGBTQ community by conducting a self-evaluation.
- o Continuing to partner with AARP to offer tax preparation assistance to residents of all ages in each of the centers.
- o Participated in the launch of national and state initiatives to Reframe Aging. This is part of the state's Longevity Ready Maryland initiative which is a 10-year multisector plan that will prepare Maryland to effectively address the challenges and maximize the benefits and opportunities of an aging society.
- o New audio/visual equipment and fitness equipment were obtained through the DoAD to update the centers' existing equipment.
- o Pascal and O'Malley Senior Activity Centers' kitchens were renovated in response to the advocacy of the Council.
- o Department of Aging and Disabilities staff member, Alagra Bass, was invited to present about the new mental health initiative in coordination with senior activity center members and Anne Arundel County residents. She presented a survey to the Advisory Council and council members gave feedback about important questions to ask that would benefit the mental health of older adults in Anne Arundel County.
- *What's Up Magazine* designed the Directory cover, poly-wrapped the Directories, and delivered them via food giveaways and outreach events. Spanish editions were printed and distributed this year. Copies are also available online in English, Spanish, and Korean [HERE](#).
- Russell Jones, chair of the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council, was recognized for demonstrating outstanding leadership and continued stewardship of our public resources while advocating for community needs. His work has helped provide critical resources and a supportive community to the older adults of Anne Arundel County.
- Angela Mickalide was voted in unanimously by the council as the new vice-chair.
- New membership at the senior activity centers continues to grow rapidly and classes and workshops fill up quickly.

## Goals for Next Year

- Coordinate with the DoAD to plan and execute the 2025 May Older Americans Month celebration event with the theme which is "Flip the Script on Aging". It focuses on

transforming how society perceives, talks about, and approaches aging. It encourages individuals and communities to challenge stereotypes and have meaningful conversations that can help dispel misconceptions.

- Continue to give feedback and recommendations to the county executive for current legislation.
- Attend county outreach events that involve other county agencies in order to increase the presence of the local senior activity centers in various communities.
- Develop a strategy to begin the Longevity Ready Ageism Awareness Maryland initiative formed by Governor Wes Moore for Anne Arundel County. This is part of the Reframe Aging Initiative.
- Develop an article for the 2025/2026 directory.
- Provide feedback for Anne Arundel County's long-range planning initiatives.
- Create and implement a senior center survey to gather pertinent information and needs from peers of what they would like to see offered through the DoAD.
- Advocate for Senior Center Capital improvements.
- Create and develop promotional activities to promote National Senior Center Month in March