

2025

Annual Report



Central Minnesota Council on Aging
3333 W Division Street
Suite 217
St. Cloud, MN 56301





Resource Specialists

L to R Row 1:
Ashley F. Leslie M.
Brenda W. Jessica
S. Row 2: Sarah M.
Natalie M. Laura S.
Carly R. Not
pictured: Robin R.



Preadmission Screening Specialists

L to R Matt B.
Nadine M.
Destinee H. Gerise
T. Leah P. Bethany
T. Meredith R.
Sadie B. Mary H.
Not pictured: Mary
T. Halie C.

Resource Coordination

L to R Row 1:
Ashley B. Joel N.
Row 2: Sonia R.
Lori L. Wendy G.
Kisha B. Not
pictured: Mary S.



Message from the Executive Director



Lori Vrolson
Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year at Central Minnesota Council on Aging (CMCOA), I am proud of the meaningful progress we have made in enhancing support for older adults, caregivers, and communities across our region. This year marked continued cooperation, thoughtful innovation, and a deepened commitment to ensuring older adults can live with dignity, independence, and connection where they call home.

Through strong partnerships with local service providers, community organizations, and state and federal agencies, CMCOA has expanded access to vital supports across our planning area. These efforts include continued investment in nutrition services, caregiver supports, transportation and in-home services that respond to both immediate needs and long-term well-being. At the heart of this work is a shared commitment to reaching individuals who may be isolated or face barriers to accessing services—particularly in our rural communities.

We have also continued to evolve how people connect to service through Minnesota Aging Pathways, by improving access to trusted information, assistance, and person-centered support. By meeting people where they are—by phone, online, and in-person—we are reinforcing pathways to resources and helping individuals and families navigate complex systems with greater confidence and clarity. These efforts reflect our focus on responsiveness, quality, and continuous improvement.

As our region's population continues to age, CMCOA remains focused on anticipating emerging needs while strengthening the network of services that older adults rely on every day. Looking ahead, we will continue to advance age-friendly initiatives, support providers and communities, and adapt our work to ensure programs remain accessible, equitable, and sustainable.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication and leadership of our staff, board of directors, advisory committee members, volunteers, community partners, and the older adults and caregivers who share their voices with us. Your participation and engagement make our mission possible, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside you as we continue to support aging well across central Minnesota.

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pam Benoit, Benton County Commissioner
Deb Scheibel, Cass County Representative
Rick Greene, Chisago County Commissioner
Jon Lubke, Crow Wing County Commissioner
Kristie LaRowe, Isanti County Commissioner
Peter Ripka, Kanabec County Commissioner
Genny Reynolds, Mille Lacs County Commissioner*
Bobby Kasper, Morrison County Commissioner
Steve Hallan, Pine County Commissioner*
Raeanne Danielowski, Sherburne County Commissioner
Tarryl Clark, Stearns County Commissioner
Joe Perske, Stearns County Commissioner
Randy Neumann, Todd County Commissioner
Jon Kangas, Wadena County Commissioner
Jeanne Holland, Wright County Commissioner*
* Executive Committee

2025 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Spencer Buerkle, Benton County Representative
Ruth Hunstiger, Benton County Representative
Collen Moravek, Cass County Representative
Kathy Blomquist, Chisago County Representative
Karl Samp, Crow Wing County Representative
Peggy Carpenter, Isanti County Representative
Farrah Gajewski, Kanabec County Representative
Julie Florell, Mille Lacs County Representative
Brooke Moren, Morrison County Representative
Patrick Meacham, Pine County Representative
Dennis Eichinger, Sherburne County Representative
Mary Bauer, Stearns County Representative
Angel Hight, Stearns County Representative
Lauren Hebert, Todd County Representative
Cindy Pederson, Wadena County Representative
LeeAnn Thimell, Wright County Representative
Dawn Achtelik, At Large Representative
Denise Sargent, At Large Representative
Dan Tupy, At Large Representative



cmcoa
Supporting our aging community



CMCOA volunteers, Sue S. and Diane K.



Puzzling is the new break time activity at CMCOA. It gives employees a chance to step away from their desks for a productive, calming, and social mental reset.



Preventing Frauds and Scams presentation facilitated by CMCOA Resource Specialist, Natalie M.

Service Awards 2025

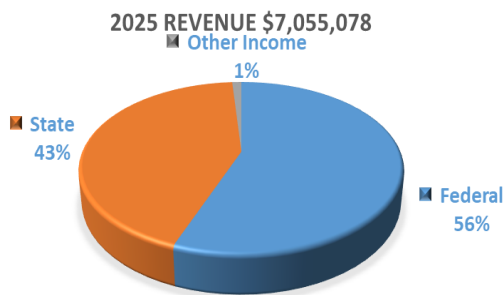


Each December, Central Minnesota Council on Aging celebrates employee longevity by presenting annual awards to honor their significant experience and contributions. Their collective expertise and dedicated service directly enhance our ability to support older adults across the region. The 2025 recipients are Laura H., Contracts Coordinator and Melissa L., Community Development Specialist.



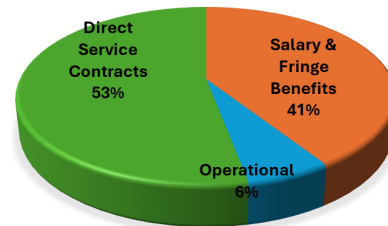
Linda G. Financial Manager (left)
Liz P. Finance Assistant

Financial Summary 2025



Support & Revenue	
Federal	\$ 3,932,886
State	\$ 3,044,878
Other Income	\$ 77,314
Total Revenue	\$ 7,055,078

2025 EXPENSES \$7,056,286



Expenses	
Salary & Fringe Benefits	\$ 2,885,427
Operational	\$ 433,312
Direct Service Contracts	\$ 3,737,547
	\$ 7,056,286
Revenue over Expenses	\$ (1,208)

(based on unaudited figures)

2025 Older Americans Act Funding

Total Dollars Utilized: \$3.7 Million

Over 9,068 Older Adults and Caregivers Supported

22 Contracted Title III Federal Older Americans Act Service Providers

Home-Delivered Meals	
\$2,345,970	
Older Adults	2,616
Meals	275,024

Congregate Meals	
\$573,590	
Older Adults	1,964
Meals	70,998

Caregiver Information	
\$6,518	
Caregivers	231
Sessions	14

Health Assessment	
\$31,653	
Older Adults	334
Hours	505

Homemaker	
\$162,475	
Older Adults	414
Hours	5,898

Support Groups	
\$14,273	
Caregivers	134
Sessions	450

Assisted Transportation	
\$230,058	
Older Adults	548
One-way trips	11,214

Legal Assistance	
\$96,397	
Older Adults	2,109
Hours	1,989

Caregiver Education	
\$2,524	
Caregivers	64
Hours	65

Evidence-Based Programs	
\$42,001	
Older Adults	278
Sessions	96

Chore	
\$27,151	
Older Adults	152
Hours	908

Respite	
\$91,055	
Caregivers	37
Hours	3,686

Caregiver Consulting	
\$107,821	
Caregivers	186
Hours	1,639

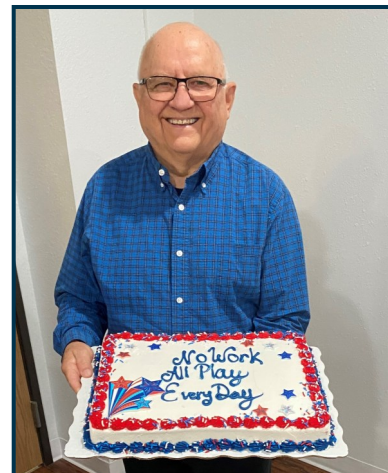
2025 Title III Provider Partners

Organization	Amount Utilized
A Home for the Day	\$60,676
Benedictine Faith in Action	\$62,794
CARE-Community Action Respecting Elders	\$21,631
Catholic Charities Senior Nutrition	\$2,230,476
Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization (CAIRO)	\$21,766
Central Minnesota Dementia Community Action Network	\$10,907
Chisago Age Well Coalition	\$2,518
Faith in Action for Cass County	\$42,316
Family Pathways	\$153,152
Growing Connections LLC	\$4,000
Helping Hands Outreach	\$15,166

Organization	Amount Utilized
Horizon Health	\$88,333
Kanabec County Public Health	\$31,653
Lutheran Social Service Senior Nutrition	\$669,769
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid	\$96,397
Northwoods Caregivers	\$10,881
Parmly on the Lake, LLC (South Chisago Meals on Wheels)	\$29,542
Paynesville ROSE Center	\$44,130
Senior Community Services	\$38,492
Vivie	\$4,249
Whitney Senior Center	\$11,323
Wright County Community Action	\$87,376

CMCOA Honors Retiree

During the June staff meeting, Roger Rieger was recognized, celebrated, and honored for his contributions to the agency. Having previously retired, Roger became involved with CMCOA as a temporary employee assisting during Medicare Open Enrollment with health insurance counseling for several years. He then accepted the support specialist position on the Preadmission Screening team, which he held for 11 years. We wished Roger all the best as he began his new adventures.





AGING PATHWAYS

The impact

“The Minnesota Aging Pathways went above and beyond what my expectations were. Thank you very much.”

“What a relief. Thank you very much! If I have any more questions I know who to call.”

“I am very grateful for everything Minnesota Aging Pathways has done for me over the years. They helped me save \$20,000 when I needed triple bypass surgery and have been helpful whenever I call.”

Callers are offered a phone survey at the end of most calls, to ensure that Minnesota Aging Pathways continues to provide quality service. A total of 760 were completed by those who agreed to take the survey and answer three questions regarding the service:

- ⇒ 97% said they received the help or information they needed
- ⇒ 98% felt the person they spoke to was knowledgeable and helpful
- ⇒ 99% would recommend Minnesota Aging Pathways to others

During a recent visit, a Minnesota Aging Pathways resource coordinator (RC) met with a previously assisted client and the client’s out-of-state friend. Together they requested an in-person meeting to review available support options. The friend shared that during a visit to Minnesota, he noticed a significant decline in the client’s memory, hygiene, and overall functioning.

Upon entering the home, the RC observed that the environment was noticeably less clean than during previous contacts. There was increased clutter, cat food contaminated with ants, and the client was wearing mismatched earrings. The client reported worsening memory, poor sleep, and uncertainty about whether medications were being taken consistently. The client also disclosed no longer paying bills, and missed appointments. The most concerning discovery was something the RC would not have identified through phone contact. There were two handmade signs that read, “Get out! Leave now! I am calling the police!” When asked, the client explained seeing little boys in the house and hearing opera singing. She said that these occurrences happened throughout the day, but especially at night—effecting her sleep.

The client agreed to allow the RC to contact their primary care provider to relay concerns. The appointment later in the week resulted in a referral for skilled home care services, which assisted with medication set-up and in-home therapies. The RC also completed a vulnerable adult report which was assigned to a county case worker.

What began as a routine in-person meeting quickly shifted to a high-level intervention once the RC was able to directly observe the situation. It is unlikely that the full extent of the client’s needs would have been recognized without the in-person visit.

Central Minnesota Council on Aging provides Minnesota Aging Pathways services in the 14-county central planning and service area in partnership with the Minnesota Board on Aging.

2025

Comments | Notes | Stats

Resource Specialists

Working within the Minnesota Aging Pathways contact center they locate services or research options to determine what kind of services might be helpful. In addition, they do an in-depth assessment and help navigate individuals to the appropriate community services.

Assisted 12,490 individuals through 19,356 points of contact.

Resource Coordinators

Assist nursing home residents who have complicated needs to return home and individuals who are living in their home to remain there as long as possible.

- **783 Individuals returned to community or remained in community.**
- **489 Support Plans**

Preadmission Screening Specialists (PAS)

Partner with qualified health care professionals at hospitals, nursing facilities, hospice agencies, and clinics to ensure that the preadmission screenings process is completed for individuals admitting to Medical Assistance certified skilled nursing facilities.

CMCOA, along with MN River Area Agency on Aging, continues to serve as the Preadmission Screening Center of Excellence. In 2025, **63,065** nursing home preadmission screens were completed statewide with **32,872** from the central region. Of the statewide screenings, **76%** had an expected length of stay under 30 days.

As a result of the preadmission screening, Minnesota Aging Pathways may refer people who have a mental illness or a developmental disability, to the county for an in-person Obra Level II screening. This screening will determine the best placement for the client or determine if there are any specialized services the client may benefit from. In 2025, **1%** of the preadmission screenings were referred to the county for an Obra Level II screening.

Medicare Open Enrollment Period

Medicare open enrollment runs from October 15 - December 7 each year. Minnesota Aging Pathways staff assist beneficiaries to compare and enroll into health and drug plans being offered for the following year. During the 2025 open enrollment period, Minnesota Aging Pathways helped beneficiaries in Minnesota save over \$6.7 million on prescription medication costs statewide with \$1.8 million in the CMCOA region.

Community Development

The Central Minnesota Council on Aging Community Development team empowers communities through knowledge to foster relationships, partnerships, and programs that support older adults and caregivers.

**Connections | Collaboration | Resilience
Innovation | Sustainability | Advocacy**



Community Development team.
Michelle W. Melissa L. and Natalie M.

Workforce Engagement and Presentations

Through workforce strategies, the team cultivates interest in aging services among both new and existing professionals while providing education through presentations to current staff, emerging employees, and business leaders. These efforts highlight key issues, best practices, and opportunities in serving older adults. Each presentation is tailored to the unique needs and interests of the audience to ensure relevance and impact. **In 2025, through targeted outreach, the team facilitated or co-led more than 35 presentations, reaching over 1,500 participants across the region and statewide.**

CMCOA partnered with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid and Pine County Aging and Disability to host a webinar, “Home Is Where the Health Is”, which educated 86 participants on home-based supports that promote independence, including home modifications, in-home services, safety strategies, MN Choices assessments, and housing options. The session highlighted how legal supports and informed housing decisions help older adults maintain autonomy and age safely in place.

Dementia Friendly Community Initiatives

Dementia Friendly Communities in Central Minnesota continued their impact. Lakes Area Memory Awareness Advocates (LAMAA) expanded Memory Maker kits through libraries, trained North Crow Wing County First Responders, and earned statewide interest in their resource card. Princeton integrated dementia education into Age-Friendly efforts with classes, a newsletter, and continued student training. Forest Lake and southern Chisago County expanded education and caregiver support through strong YMCA partnerships. St. Cloud hosted a series of dementia-focused film nights with discussions.

Ageism Education and Awareness

In 2025, a key priority was increasing awareness and understanding of ageism. This was accomplished through presentations, community outreach, and intentional conversations woven into regional and statewide engagements. In total, the messaging reached more than 600 individuals. CMCOA hosted two **Aging Reimagined** workshops in Brainerd and Cambridge, facilitated by Dr. Rajean Moone, from the University of Minnesota.



Presenters for the Responding with Compassion: Trauma-Informed Care for Older Adults Across Cultures summit

Building Bridges to Support, Engage, and Promote Social Connection

- **Together Well Toolkit Training** The toolkit is a dedicated effort to combat social isolation and loneliness (SIL) among older adults and caregivers. More than 35 community professionals participated in the training.
- **Building Bridges: The Power of Human Connection in an Era of Social Isolation** This summit drew 153 participants (both in-person and virtual) and emphasized the importance of human connection and showcased practical, evidence-based methods to reduce SIL especially in older adults.
- **Responding with Compassion: Trauma-Informed Care for Older Adults Across Cultures** This summit had 112 participants. The content covered culturally responsive, trauma-informed approaches; behavioral wellness; the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals; trauma in Indigenous communities; and perspectives from the Somali-East African elder community.
- Authored two articles for the Brightside of 50 magazine.
 - “Importance of Age-Inclusivity” (Summer 2025)
 - “You’re Not Alone: Resources and Support for Caregivers” (Winter 2025)

Dementia Awareness and Education

The Community Development team in 2025 advanced its work to increase dementia awareness while strengthening support for individuals living with dementia, their caregivers, and community networks. Alongside ongoing community education, the team partnered with several communities as they continued building local initiatives focused on dementia friendly education, awareness, and support.

- Dementia Friendly Workforce Education - Facilitated trainings at Central Lakes College and St. Cloud Technical College for **89 participants**.
- **Trained 50 staff and family caregivers** with Quality Care Services, Inc. (Group homes for people living with Down syndrome).
- Dementia Friendly Education for Dental Providers - **Nineteen providers participated** from St. Cloud and surrounding communities including Monticello, Becker, Milaca, and Onamia.
- A milestone was reached across the state of Minnesota totaling **30,000 Dementia Friends**. As Dementia Friends Champion Master Trainers the CMCOA Community Development team participated in a project to record Tips and Tricks for New Champions.
<https://dementiafriendsmn.org>

Age-Friendly Initiative Expansion

The CMCOA Community Development team supported the expansion of Age-Friendly initiatives across the region and statewide through educational events, technical assistance, and ongoing outreach. Their efforts helped strengthen awareness, build community capacity, and advance Age-Friendly work throughout Minnesota.

- **Provided technical assistance to three Age-Friendly initiatives** — each community at different phases of work but all incorporated impactful activities.
- Offered **technical assistance** (one-on-one and group support), to **11 Age-Friendly Community grantees**.
- **Hosted two virtual Communities of Learning events reaching over 100 participants**.
“Telling Your Story with Data” and “Emergency Preparedness: Whole Community Planning”
- **Hosted the Central 2025 Age-Friendly Regional Exchange**, where **44 participants** were provided an up-date on Age-Friendly Minnesota and the Multisector Blueprint for Aging.
- **Participated in Multisector Blueprint for Aging Action Teams**, a statewide effort to ensure all Minnesotans can age with inclusion, value, and opportunity. Teams were developed bases on four identified priorities: Connected Communities, Emergency Preparedness— Individual Rights & Safety, Optimized Health & Longevity, and Economic Security & Vitality.