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Your Update from AgeOptions

February 2016

## Aging Care Connections

2016 is a year of both celebration and caution for Aging Care Connections.

Celebration because this is the 45th anniversary year of the La Grange-based agency that offers “one-call senior care” in the 38 communities of Lyons, Proviso, Riverside, Leyden and Norwood Park Townships.



And caution because, like so many other social service agencies in Illinois, it is facing one of the greatest challenges in its history due to the ongoing state budget impasse.

“In my 38 years (with the agency) I haven’t seen anything like this,” said Debra

Vershelde, Aging Care Connections’ executive director, who emphasized that the agency does not plan to cut programs or services at this time. “But the future isn’t as clear. Our agency isn’t immune to outside influences. In this case, it’s the current budget impasse in Springfield. What this means in dollars and cents is that our agency is not receiving roughly \$100,000 per month from the state to run programs and services. That represents a loss of \$700,000 in state payments from July 2015 through January 2016.”

Vershelde, who joined the agency in 1977 and became director in 1999, is no stranger to challenges.

“In 45 years, we’ve gone through all the changes,” she observed. “One of the hardest things was changing from a multi-purpose senior center to focusing solely on social services.”

That transition, in 2006, was in response to changes occurring both in communities and among the individuals served. “Peoples’ situations were more complex, the family dynamics, levels of impairment,” Vershelde explained. “It’s more common now to have clients over 100, and their children and grandchildren are also our clients. We now have a lot of old-old in the community.”

In 2009, what was then the Southwest Suburban Center on Aging solidified this evolution by changing its name to Aging Care Connections. A year later it incorporated the Aging Well

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Partnership to enhance its relationship with the community, continuing an initiative started by AgeOptions.

Aging Care Connections now serves more than 8,000 individuals a year, 7,000 of whom are older adults and the rest caregivers. The agency has grown and developed in 45 years to offer a comprehensive range of information, programs and services designed to meet the changing needs of older adults and provide support for their families.

The agency's mission is to enrich the quality of life of older adults and their families through a range of programs and services that enhance their well-being and independence. Those programs and services are designed to provide options, information, and guidance for care in order to enhance older adults' ability to remain as independent as possible in their own communities. They include:

- Information and Assistance Coordinated Point of Entry
- Comprehensive Care Coordination
- Chore Housekeeping
- Transportation
- Home Delivered Meals
- Congregate Meal Site
- Community Care Program
- Respite for Caregivers
- Designated Adult Protective Services Agency
- Benefits Assistance
- Support Groups
- Caregiver Support Program
- Aging Well Neighborhood
- Aging Resource Center (Transitional Care)

For the 2016 fiscal year, AgeOptions provides \$193,303 for Information and Assistance and Chore Housekeeping under Title IIIB of the Older Americans Act, and \$128,571 for the Title IIIC programs Congregate and Home Delivered Meals. The Caregiver Resource Center, Title IIIE, is funded at \$145,414; Respite Services at \$55,795; and the Adult Protective Services I-Team at \$4,118.



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"We have provided designated funding to Aging Care Connections since AgeOptions was created, and we commend their professional services, innovations and partnerships with us over the years," Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president and CEO, said.

The last item on the above list, the Aging Resource Center, reflects not only current services but a strategic direction toward the future. "The biggest change we're seeing in aging and our community is a shift in health care – how health care systems look at the community," Verschelde said.

Aging Care Connections is making strides toward getting hospitals to see the value of community-based organizations, and is working to join with providers to keep older people healthy, more engaged in their treatment and their health.

The Aging Resource Center program addresses the nationwide problem of patients needing to be readmitted to hospitals after discharge. "We see ourselves as a partner with health care systems because patients who are released from hospitals come back to the community," Verschelde said. "Oftentimes it's a non-medical issue that brings people back to the hospital." Staff members are in several area hospitals, helping to educate both patients and staff about resources available to older adults transitioning out of the hospital.

The ARC program offers older adults and their families the opportunity to explore and secure community resources prior to discharge from Adventist La Grange Memorial Hospital and local skilled care facilities. Under the ARC banner, a cutting edge transitional care program has been developed: The Bridge Model, which is an evidence-based transitional care program that assists older adults with the transition home from an acute care setting.

"Since 1971, we haven't stopped refining our programs in order to improve the lives of older adults and their families," Verschelde said.

While Aging Care Connections does not plan to cut services or programs because of the ongoing state budget impasse, it has been forced to tighten services in some areas while staying true to its mission. "We will continue to serve older adults and their families," Verschelde said, "but our activities in the near future will include much more information about advocacy and fundraising."

For more information about Aging Care Connections, go to [agingcareconnections.org](http://agingcareconnections.org).