



Florida Association of
Aging Services Providers

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Florida Association of Aging Services Providers

Guest Editors: Mark Adler, Meals on Wheels South Florida
Carlos Martinez, United Home Care Services, Inc.

Message from the President

By Darrell J. Drummond, Council on Aging of St. Lucie, Inc.



This is the final newsletter for 2023. I don't know about you but I feel this year has flown by quickly. The truth of the matter is, as I age, it seems that the daily obligations take up more and more of my time and I seem to have less time to stop and smell the roses.

We have just finished celebrating Thanksgiving and are now focused on the end of the year activities. Many of us are preparing for events to recognize our clients and our staffs. There will be opportunities for us to come together and recognize the contributions of our staffs and celebrate the accomplishments of our agencies and begin to think about how we can do better in the new year.

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This Issue's Sponsors



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As we close out this year, I would like to point to some of the successes of this organization in 2023. We had another successful annual conference in Orlando; one of the highest attendance in our history. We continued our focus on the workforce issues in collaboration with the Florida AARP to see where our membership organizations stand in preparing for the new dynamic of post COVID employment challenges. We maintained a more than ninety percent (90%) membership renewal rate for 2023. We recognized the success of our continued advocacy campaigns with our Florida legislature which led to increased funding for our programs. As we worked to return to normal after the pandemic, we participated with DOEA and the AAA's to implement new programs utilizing additional funding brought about with the passage of the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Most of these funds have been expended so we are looking for ways to continue some of the successes from this program in the future. In October, we held our annual retreat and spent time planning for the upcoming session of the legislature, recognizing this will be an election year.

Finally, we have committed to working with F4A's leadership on a quarterly basis to identify and focus on areas of mutual concern. It is my hope that we are able to find solutions that allow for the greatest success in sharing information without overly burdening our organizations and their staffs with unreasonable requirements for data input and reporting.

I would like to thank Margaret Lynn Duggar and Associates for their continued professional support and leadership as we address our issues each year.

To everyone, I wish you a happy holiday season and I look forward to seeing and working with each of you in the new year.

Darrell Drummond



Florida Legislative Session 2024—Begins January 9th



The 2024 legislative session in Florida will begin January 9th, 2024. It is expected that this session will address several key issues impacting seniors, with a focus on enhancing the well-being and support systems for the aging population. Governor DeSantis has released budget recommendations that signify commitment to senior programs. Anticipated legislative measures include:

Budget Increases: Governor DeSantis proposes substantial budgetary increases for critical senior programs, such as a \$10 million boost for Community Care for the Elderly (CCE), \$6 million for Alzheimer's Respite Care (ADI), and \$5 million for Home Care for the Elderly (HCE). These increases aim to strengthen community-based services and address specific needs related to Alzheimer's.

Support for Alzheimer's Research: The budget also includes a \$2.1 million increase for the Florida Alzheimer's Center of Excellence, demonstrating a commitment to advancing research and resources dedicated to addressing Alzheimer's disease.

Older Americans Act Contracts: A significant budget authority of \$52.8 million is proposed to support Older Americans Act Contracts. This funding is expected to fortify the infrastructure that supports various services for older adults, including nutrition programs and caregiver support.

Public Guardian Services: An additional \$1.4 million increase is proposed to serve the Public Guardian wait list, recognizing the importance of addressing the needs of vulnerable seniors requiring guardian services to ensure their rights and well-being.

Technological Advancements: The proposed \$2.8 million for eCIRTS implementation reflects an investment in technological solutions. eCirts is helping streamline services, contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of elder care programs.

Senior Homelessness Prevention: To address the issue of senior homelessness, the proposed budget allocates \$10 million in recurring funds for rental

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assistance. This funding, coordinated with the Department of Children and Families, is aimed at providing financial support and stability to seniors at risk of homelessness.

Overall, the 2024 legislative session presents an opportunity to advance legislation that promotes the well-being, dignity, and quality of life for Florida's seniors. FASP Members including service providers and advocacy groups, are expected to play a crucial role in educating legislators about the value and importance of these proposed measures. The Florida Council on Aging's (FCOA) Advocacy Initiative, which has helped in securing funding increases of over \$100 million for home and community-based programs, seeks continued support to address the needs of the over 117,000 seniors still on waitlists for essential services.

[Donate Today to FCOA's Advocacy Initiative!](#)



Florida Approves 15.1% Workers' Compensation Rate Reduction for 2024

The state Office of Insurance Regulation has recently given the green light for a substantial 15.1 percent decrease in workers' compensation insurance rates, set to come into effect in January 2024.

This approval aligns with the National Council on Compensation Insurance's (NCCI) request made in August. The NCCI, responsible for industry rate filings, based its proposal on the favorable claims experience observed during the 2020 and 2021 policy years.

The upcoming rate reduction marks a positive trend, building upon a series of decreases in recent years. In the current year, regulators approved an overall 8.4 percent decrease, emphasizing the stability and competitiveness of the workers' compensation market in Florida.

According to a statement from Insurance Commissioner Michael Yaworsky, "It's clear the workers' compensation market in Florida is stable and competitive; I'm confident lower workers' compensation rates will assist in ensuring that all of Florida's businesses have the opportunity to succeed in our state."



7 Signs That You Are Aging Well

According to medical experts, aging well is a balance of three key components: physical health, emotional connection, and mental support. These elements intertwine to create a life that is not only healthful but also fulfilling and vibrant.

As we age, it becomes increasingly important to cultivate behaviors that contribute to our overall well-being. Here are seven clear signs that you are taking proactive steps to care for yourself in the realms of physical, emotional, and mental health:

1. **Lifelong Learning:** A commitment to continuous learning is a powerful indicator of aging well. Taking time to explore new subjects, skills, or hobbies not only keeps your mind sharp but also contributes to a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment.
2. **Honesty About Needs:** Aging well involves a candid acknowledgment of your needs. Being honest with yourself and others about your emotional and physical requirements fosters healthy communication and strengthens emotional resilience.
3. **Community Connection:** Building and maintaining a supportive community is a cornerstone of aging well. Cultivating meaningful relationships with family, friends, or community groups provides emotional support and contributes to a sense of belonging.
4. **Physical Health Priority:** Prioritizing your physical health is a fundamental aspect of aging well. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep contribute to overall well-being, enabling you to enjoy a more active and vibrant lifestyle.
5. **Pleasure in Activities:** Doing things you genuinely enjoy is a key sign of self-care. Engaging in activities that bring joy and satisfaction contributes positively to your emotional and mental well-being, creating a more rewarding life.
6. **Open Medication Discussions:** Maintaining open and transparent communication with your healthcare provider about the medications you take is crucial. This proactive approach ensures that your healthcare plan is tailored to your evolving needs and helps manage your overall well-being.
7. **Future Planning:** Planning for the future is a wise and forward-thinking behavior. Whether it's financial planning, healthcare decisions, or creating a support network, taking steps to prepare for the future enhances your sense of security and peace of mind.



Embracing these behaviors can significantly contribute to your overall health and well-being as you age.

Who Will Care for Older Adults? We've Plenty of Know-How but Too Few Specialists

By [Judith Graham](#)

NOVEMBER 10, 2023

Thirty-five years ago, Jerry Gurwitz was among the first physicians in the United States to be credentialed as a geriatrician — a doctor who specializes in the care of older adults.

"I understood the demographic imperative and the issues facing older patients," Gurwitz, 67 and chief of geriatric medicine at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, told me. "I felt this field presented tremendous opportunities."

But today, Gurwitz fears geriatric medicine is on the decline. Despite the surging older population, there are fewer geriatricians now (just over 7,400) than in 2000 (10,270), he noted in a recent piece in JAMA. (In those two decades, the population 65 and older expanded by more than 60%.) Research suggests each geriatrician should care for no more than 700 patients; the current ratio of providers to older patients is 1 to 10,000.



[Read the Full Article Here](#)

This story was reprinted with permission from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Positive Signs: U.S. Life Expectancy Shows Recovery Since Pandemic

According to a recent CDC analysis of 2022 data, there is a notable improvement in U.S. life expectancy after a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average life expectancy is now 77.5 years, reflecting a positive shift of 1.1 years compared to 2021. However, this increase accounts for less than 50% of the loss experienced between 2019 and 2021 when the average life expectancy dropped by 2.4 years due to the pandemic. Despite the recent gains, the nation's life expectancy remains at the level seen in 2003, indicating nearly two decades of lost progress. Most of the improvements in 2022 are attributed to a decrease in COVID-19 deaths, with COVID-19 dropping to the fourth leading cause of death.

[Read the Full Article Here](#)



NEW STUDY: EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF MEALS ON WHEELS

By: Mark Adler, Meals on Wheels South Florida

For more than 50 years, Meals on Wheels has supported our nation's seniors through a network of local community-based programs. These providers serve as a lifeline to those struggling with food insecurity, nutrition challenges, mobility, loneliness and countless other difficulties of aging. Meals on Wheels service begins with the meal and enables local programs to deliver so much more. The delivery of a nutritious meal creates the opportunity to build a relationship with the individual senior, opening the door for Meals on Wheels providers to identify and deliver valuable services that promote independence and well-being.

Each day we hear anecdotes of how Meals on Wheels has touched people's lives. And, for every positive story there's an opportunity to apply real numbers to the impact Meals on Wheels has on those who benefit from services. In ***The Case for Meals on Wheels: An Evidence-Based Solution to Senior Hunger and Isolation***, Meals on Wheels America looked at 38 studies conducted between 1996 and 2023, and from them has drawn strong associations between receiving Meals on Wheels and experiencing positive health and well-being outcomes.

ABOUT MEALS ON WHEELS

Meals on Wheels America is the leadership organization supporting the network of more than 5,000 community-based programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior hunger and isolation. Through the delivery of healthy meals tailored to the needs of older adults, the door opens to address social connection, safety and much more – all of which is proven to help America's seniors to live nourished lives with independence and dignity. By providing funding, leadership, education, research and advocacy support, Meals on Wheels America supports its local member programs to strengthen their communities, one senior at a time.

PURPOSE AND METHODS

To secure the vital public policy support, partnerships and funding necessary for their success, senior nutrition programs must provide concrete evidence of their impact. In this comprehensive review, our aim is to consolidate and convey existing research on the profound effects of Meals on Wheels on participants' health and well-being. By harnessing this invaluable information, the network of community-based senior nutrition programs can effectively advocate for the essential services it provides.

FINDINGS

This comprehensive research review highlights a set of meaningful and consistent findings regarding the impacts of Meals on Wheels programs. These findings underscore the critical

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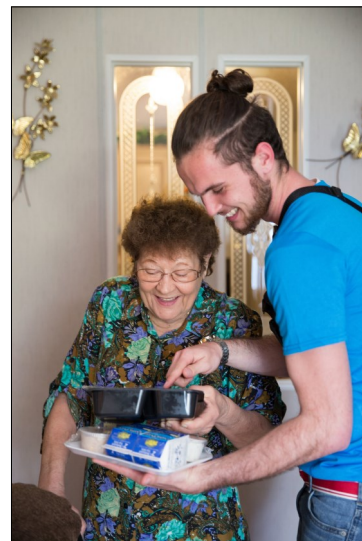
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contributions of home-delivered meals in improving the health, safety and social connections of individuals' lives, promoting well-being and fostering independent living.

Throughout our investigation, we (Meals on Wheels America) employed diverse search strategies to identify numerous studies exploring the impacts of Meals on Wheels. A total of 38 selected studies, spanning from 1996 to 2023 (excluding those cited for background), examined the impacts of Meals on Wheels on clients' health and well-being, health care utilization and health care costs. Of the 38 studies reviewed, 37 found evidence of positive effects of Meals on Wheels on one or more outcomes. This review synthesizes this large and varied body of literature, compiling findings from diverse studies such as randomized controlled trials, statistical modeling studies and qualitative studies that support the immense value of home delivered meal programs. We classified impacts as "primary findings" if we uncovered evidence of substantive positive impact of Meals on Wheels service on that outcome from three or more studies. We classified impacts that did not meet this threshold as "additional impacts." These are potential areas for further research.

[To Read The Complete Article Please Click Here!](#)

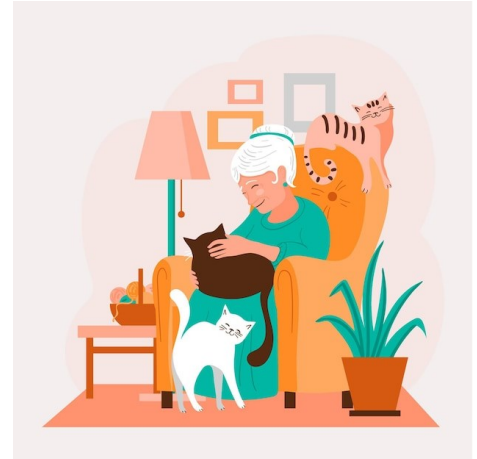


Caring For Seniors and their Four-Legged Family Members

The Story Behind Meals on Wheels South Florida's Meals for Companion Pets Program

By: Mark Adler, Meals on Wheels South Florida

It was 1999 in Fort Lauderdale when Bobbi, a Meals on Wheels Volunteer who had been delivering meals to homebound seniors for 2 years with Meals on Wheels South Florida, saw a meal container on Jake's floor. Bobbi had been delivering meals to Jake for three weeks. When she asked Jake if she could pick it up, Jake said, "Oh, no, thank you. That's Buddie's plate." Buddie was a 15-pound white Yorkie and Jake's absolute best friend and only family member. Bobbi discovered that Jake was sharing his meals with his dog, Buddie every meal. Jake said he couldn't get to the store to get pet food and even if he could have, he couldn't afford it. Jake would rather go hungry himself than have Buddie go without. Knowing that sharing half his meal with Buddie left Jake with half the nutrition he needed, Bobbi



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Nutrition and Aging Resource Center—Webinar on Marketing Your Nutrition Program

The Administration for Community Living and the Nutrition and Aging Resource Center recently held a webinar titled "Market Your Nutrition Program." This was an exciting webinar that shared best practices for your nutrition programs as well as "tools" to successfully recruit volunteers. With real life examples from a statewide nutrition survey to examples on how to specifically target your audience, this session will help you spread the word on nutrition services that are available and help you to reach the most people with limited resources.

A recording of the webinar is now available on the ACL website along with the supporting materials that were mentioned in the presentation. Links to all materials are included below.

- ⇒ [Market Your Nutrition Program \(YouTube\)](#)
- ⇒ [Decision Tree C1 and C2 Funding](#)
- ⇒ [Congregate Nutrition Survey](#)
- ⇒ [Home-Delivered Nutrition Survey](#)
- ⇒ [TCAD's County Profiles](#)



**Nutrition and Aging
Resource Center**

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had an idea. She would get pet food donated for Jake to feed Buddie and bring it with her regular deliveries. And so, it began.

Flash forward two months and 10 Meals on Wheels volunteers had filled Bobbi's garage with six hundred pounds of donated dog and cat food for the pets of the seniors they served each week. It grew and grew and became one of the very first Meals on Wheels Meals for Pets programs in the country.

Today, Meals on Wheels South Florida's Meals for Companion Pets Program is serving 300 dogs and cats of our home-delivered meal clients with a monthly supply of wet and/or dry food, treats, and collars, leashes or other pet care items when needed. But we discovered there were other unmet needs for our 4-legged clients and those who so rely on them for their unconditional love and companionship. Veterinary care was so urgently needed to keep everyone healthy and treat those who were not. Grooming was impossible for the seniors who could not bend down or kneel to give their fur babies a bath or trim nails (which can be a real danger to thin skin).

That is when we got the stories together, went to potential donors and the rest is history. For the past 10 years, the Program has offered no-cost in-home veterinary care and grooming for the 4-legged family members. The outpouring of support for the program has been enormous and unwavering. Since the beginning, it has been completely volunteer and donation driven and has never wanted for funding. In fact, we are currently looking for pet hotels we can work with to board the pets of our clients who need to go into the hospital to receive the care they need. Many refuse to leave their homes to get this care for fear of leaving their fur babies home alone and what may happen in case they cannot get home quickly.

Seeing and literally feeling the bond between our clients and their pets, like Buddie, it is no wonder that 95% of our clients in the program say their pets have made them healthier, comforted when down, less lonely, loved and would feel lost without them. 80% of these clients also reported that they believed Meals on Wheels made it possible for them to keep their pet. It all starts with a knock, a smile and seeing, listening and making a move to brighten the day and the life of those we are caring for and about, including all those with 4 legs and kisses for days.



Visit [Meals on Wheels South Florida's Website](#) to learn more about their Companion Pets Program!



Connecting Seniors to The Communities Where They Live and To The World Around Them Through Technology and Volunteerism

By: Alina Palenzuela, Chief Marketing and Volunteer Engagement Officer and Blanca Ceballos, Community Relations Manager, United HomeCare®



*Generations working together for older adults.
There's just no place like home.*

Genesis: National Community Care Corps Awards United HomeCare a \$180,000 Grant to Launch AVUS Tech Pals® Volunteer Program

United HomeCare®, a 501(c)(3) non-profit home and community care organization serving South Florida for 50 years, marked the first anniversary of its AVUS Tech Pals® Volunteer Program in October 2022. AVUS Tech Pals®, an extension of AVUS Connect®, the brainchild of AVUS Connect® Founder, Shawn Martinez (Belen Jesuit Class of 2023), was inspired by a call to action to address isolation and depression among older adults. On Christmas Eve 2018, Shawn's maternal grandmother passed away unexpectedly and three months later, his paternal grandmother passed away, leaving the family and especially his grandfathers devastated and mourning the loss of their lifelong partners. "Avus" which means grandfather in Latin, was inspired by Shawn's call to action to help his grandfathers who were negatively impacted by his grandmothers' absence.



Genesis: AVUS Connect® Intergenerational Volunteer Program high school and UHC older adult volunteers "Generations working together for older adults."

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Shawn Martinez, AVUS Connect® Founder, receiving the FPL Quality Senior Living Award for Public Service at the 2022 Florida Council on Aging Conference.

Through contact with them, conversations, he was able to help them embrace positive memories and then added visual impact by communicating through his tablet using FaceTime, noticing how upbeat they became when they had visual contact with him and establishing that “connecting” was the key to reducing isolation and loneliness. Shawn rallied his high school classmates and worked with United HomeCare’s Volunteer Team, led by Alina Palenzuela and Blanca Ceballos, to inspire other high school students to volunteer in older adult causes, extending service to adults with disabilities and family caregivers.

AVUS Tech Pals®, inspired by Shawn’s work and vision, engages volunteers 18 years and older in older adult causes to empower older adults with tech training and support made possible with funding support from the **National Community Care Corps** through a federal grant and cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) led by four national non-profit organizations: The Oasis Institute, Caregiver Action Network, and USAging.

Paul Weiss, President of The Oasis Institute which administers Community Care Corps said “We are pleased to make this award to United HomeCare. Their excellent volunteer model was chosen over other outstanding programs across the country,”

The unprecedented program is a momentous leap forward in facilitating older adults, persons with disabilities, and family caregivers with much-needed assistance benefitting countless local individuals and families and generating a lasting impact on those served, as well as the volunteers serving them. In October 2022, **AVUS Tech Pals surpassed its goal of serving 150 individuals, ahead of its 18-month goal.**

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Enjoying Peace of Mind with The Claris Companion Tablet

With generous funding and support from the **Alliance for Aging the Area Agency on Aging for Monroe and Miami-Dade counties through the Florida Department of Elder Affairs** United HomeCare was able to purchase Claris Companion tablets designed and customized for seniors specifically older seniors.

The tablets feature video calls, messages, video albums, photo albums, games, news, websites and many more features that are not only easy to use but eliminate the complexity of standard tablets.

These customized tablets for seniors can also be managed by family to remotely configure the tablet anywhere in the world and components like alerts and an activity dashboard **bring caregivers peace of mind knowing their loved one is safe**



Seniors learning how to use the Claris Companion Tablet funded by The Alliance for Aging and Florida Department of Elder Affairs and with the training provided by United HomeCare AVUS Tech Pals volunteers funded by National Community Care Corps.

[Please click here to read full article](#)

The Affliction and Compassion of Older Familial Caregivers

By: Alejandra Perry , AVUS Connect® high school volunteer, Miami Coral Park Senior High School, Class of 2023

Nationally, there remains over 41,000 adults with disabilities that depend on familial caregivers over the age of 60 (Bricklin). In Miami-Dade County, there are 272,374 adults with disabilities (National Institute of Disability). A quarter of these individuals have spent their lives under the care and supervision of a family member (U.S. Census Bureau). With age, caregivers grow incapable of overseeing their dependent(s), but they often deny their own needs to continue to provide care. A caregiver's needs as they age proliferate to the extent that they cannot care for themselves nor their dependent. Instead, they continue to carry the responsibilities of multiple generations in order to secure the welfare of their dependent.

Age and dependence impact all individuals involved in the process, especially adults with disabilities and their corresponding caretakers. Adults with disabilities, ages 18-59, populate 27% of the United States, 26.8% of Florida, and 29.4% of the city of Miami (Center for Disease Control, Florida Health, and U.S. Census). Nationally, 16% of adults are caregivers (Family Caregiver Alliance), but in Florida, as many as 25% of adults are caregivers to adults with developmental disabilities (CDC). These individuals provide care despite needing care themselves; the average age of a caregiver in the US is 50 years old (see fig. 1), while the average caretaker for an adult with disabilities is 65 years old (FCA and CDC).

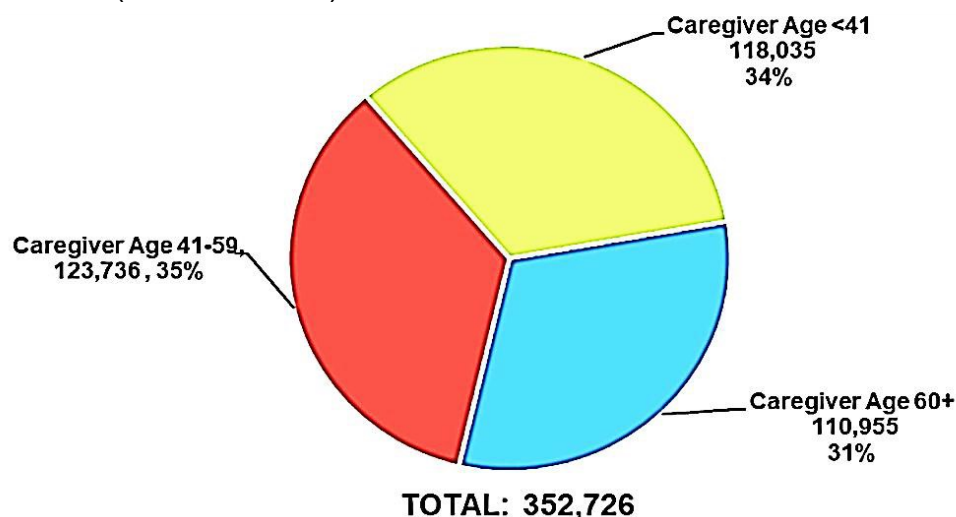
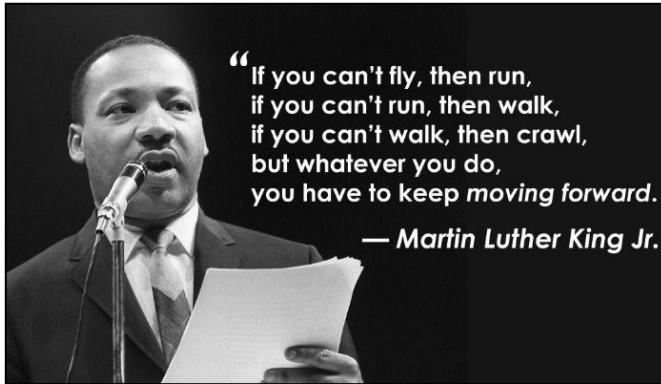


Figure 1. There are 234,691 individuals in Florida caring for adults with disabilities. Most caretakers are in the phases of preretirement and retirement, but many are not receiving the care they need. Source: "The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities." fddc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/State-of-the-State-Report.pdf.

[Please click here to read full article](#)

Upcoming Events

Martin Luther King Day is on Monday,
Jan. 15, 2023



Valentines Day is on Wednesday,
Feb. 14, 2023



SAVE THE DATE!

Florida Conference on Aging 2024
August 5-7, 2024 • Hyatt Regency, Orlando, FL

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HAPPY NEW YEAR



2024



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Council on Aging
of St. Lucie, Inc.

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Together we make community happen.

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County Florida

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BAY COUNTY
Council on Aging

<https://www.baycouncilonaging.org/>



<https://www.humana.com/medicaid/florida-medicaid>



<https://states.aarp.org/florida/>



<https://www.pascocountyfl.net/476/Public-Services>



<https://www.broward.org/>

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