

FEATURED INSIDE



- 02 Our CARES Team
- 04 Responding to Emergencies
- 06 Fighting Alzheimer's
- 10 Proactive Driving Tips
- 11 Beware of Imposter Scams

- 16 Exercise for Falls Prevention
- 17 CARES Staff Assist in Hurricane Recovery
- 19 Navigating Grief During the Holidays

Elder 
Affairs
FLORIDA

Agging Outlook

WINTER 2024

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

As December approaches, I'm overcome with joy and gratitude as I celebrate three incredible years at the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. Reflecting on our journey together, I can't help but marvel at the remarkable work of our dedicated team. Each and every one of them plays a vital role in our mission, and their unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of Florida's seniors is truly inspiring.

Over the past three years, we've achieved so much together. One of the highlights has been the launch of the Florida Alzheimer's Center of Excellence (FACE)—a groundbreaking initiative and the first of its kind led by a state agency. This center provides crucial support to caregivers and individuals living with Alzheimer's and related dementias, all while using evidence-based strategies and a "no-wrong-door" approach. Through innovative partnerships, like the one between INSIGHTEC and a consortium of Florida

universities, we're leading the way in advancing research and clinical trials, truly establishing Florida as "The Brain State."

In the last edition of Aging Outlook, I shared the exciting news about our cutting-edge workshops designed to boost operational and business skills for our partners. These first-in-the-nation workshops have provided essential tools to help organizations navigate the complexities of the aging sector. The enthusiasm we saw at our first two workshops earlier this year was just amazing, and I'm thrilled to say that more workshops will be offered in the future! This is just one of the ways we're continuing to provide vital training and support for our partners.

Investing in our staff has also been a top priority, and this year we were able to host some fantastic leadership training sessions. Watching our team grow, gain new skills, and become empowered to excel in their roles has been such a joy. By

supporting our people, we're not only enhancing our service delivery but also fostering a compassionate and thriving environment for both staff and seniors alike.

I also want to take a moment to reflect on the resilience we showed during Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton this year. I had the honor of visiting some of the hardest-hit areas and working alongside Governor DeSantis, First Lady DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez, and so many other amazing leaders and volunteers. Together, we provided hot meals, water, and essential supplies to those in need. Witnessing the strength of our community in the face of adversity was nothing short of inspiring, and it reaffirmed our commitment to supporting one another.

As we enter this holiday season, I encourage each of you to take

Continued on page 3



ABOVE: Secretary Michelle Branham assisting with Hurricane Helene recovery efforts in Holiday, Florida.

CARES

Comprehensive Assessment and Review for Long-Term Care Services



By Secretary Michelle Branham, Florida Department of Elder Affairs

As we look back on the year's disaster-response efforts, I want to take a moment to express my

deepest appreciation for the dedicated professionals in our CARES program.

For those who may not be familiar, the Comprehensive Assessment and Review for Long-Term Care Services (CARES) Program is a vital component of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. CARES provides essential services for individuals seeking long-term care, including comprehensive assessments and referrals for those who need assistance with aging-related services. During emergencies, the CARES team plays a critical role in ensuring that our state's most vulnerable populations—especially older adults—receive timely care and support in the midst of disasters.

This year, our CARES team went above and beyond, responding quickly to emergency situations and working tirelessly to assist individuals in need. Whether it was traveling long distances, working extended hours, or coordinating with partners, our CARES professionals were there every step of the way. Their unwavering dedication, often under difficult and high-pressure conditions, was integral to our ability to provide emergency



care and ensure the safety of Florida's seniors.

Thanks to their hard work, we made significant progress in assisting clients with placement services and deepened our relationships with external partners, strengthening our response network for future emergencies. I am incredibly proud of the resilience, professionalism, and compassion demonstrated by our team members.

On behalf of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the entire CARES team for their tireless efforts and unwavering dedication. Your hard work ensures that Florida's seniors continue to receive the care and attention they deserve, and your impact reaches far beyond the scope of these missions.

Thank you for your continued service and dedication to our community.

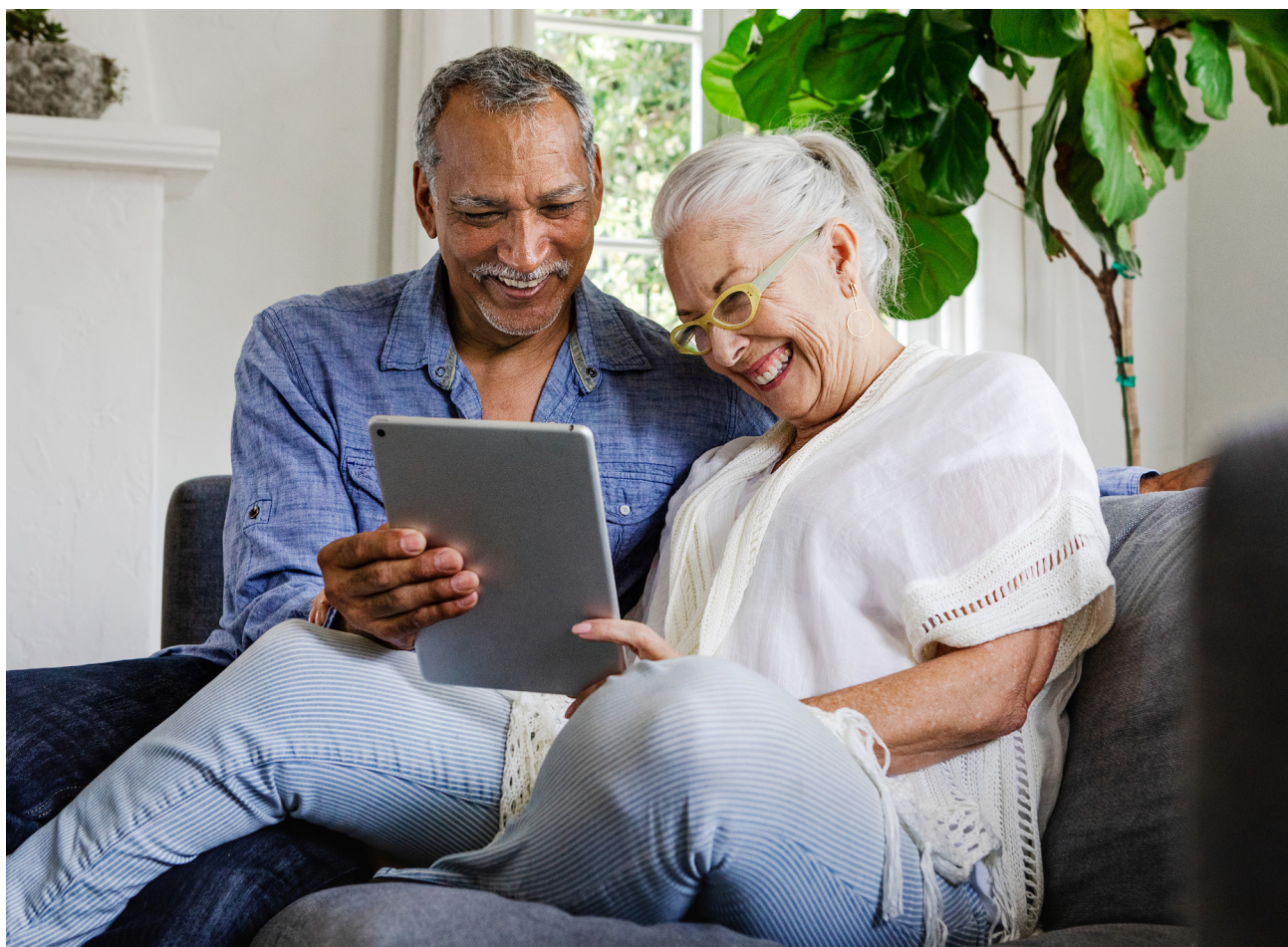
Keep up with the Department of Elder Affairs on Social Media!

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs actively connects with Florida's seniors, caregivers, and families through various social media platforms. By utilizing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, we aim to provide valuable information on topics that matter most to the aging community. Whether it's promoting health and wellness tips, sharing details about upcoming events, or offering guidance on available resources and services, our social media presence helps ensure that vital information is just a click away.

Additionally, we offer a front-row seat to the travels and speaking engagements of the Secretary, allowing our community to

follow along as we advocate for seniors and promote the work being done throughout the state. Through regular updates, you can stay informed about the Department's initiatives and the positive impact they're having on Florida's aging population.

By staying connected through social media, we are fostering an ongoing dialogue that strengthens relationships within Florida's aging network. Whether you're looking for the latest news, helpful resources, or opportunities to engage, be sure to follow our channels to stay informed and connected to the mission of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs.



Secretary's Message...continued from page 1

a moment to reflect on the power of connection and community. This time of year is especially meaningful for our seniors, many of whom cherish the warmth and companionship of family and friends. The holidays can be a joyful time, but they can also be a reminder of loss for some. Let's make sure to reach out to those who may be feeling a bit lonely, so that everyone can share in the festive spirit in some way.

I hope you all enjoy creating lasting memories with your loved ones—whether through big holiday celebrations, shared meals, or quiet moments together. Let's carry that spirit of giving and connection into the new year as we continue our important work in service to Florida's seniors.

Looking ahead, I'm filled with excitement about what the future holds. Together, we can keep building on our successes and continue enhancing the support we provide to the seniors who mean so much to us.

Wishing you all a joyful and heartwarming holiday season!

Warmly,

Secretary Michelle Branham

Responding to Emergencies with Kindness and Love



*By Jessica Gloria,
CARES Supervisor
PSA11, Florida
Department of
Elder Affairs*

When disaster strikes, it leaves more than just physical damage in its wake—it shakes people to their core. As part of the CARES (Comprehensive Assessment and Review for Long-Term Care Services) team in South Florida, I had the privilege of stepping in to assist the elderly residents who lost everything in the devastating apartment fire on June 10th in Miami. Their homes, their belongings—clothing, furniture, personal documents, medications—all gone in an instant.

From the moment we were called upon to help, my team and I were ready. We were prepared to provide not just assistance, but compassion. These survivors weren't just victims of a fire—they were people facing unimaginable distress. It became clear that, while our role was to help with physical recovery, we also had to offer emotional support and a path forward.

Throughout my visits with these resilient individuals, I had the opportunity to assist many seniors who were in great need. Yet, one gentleman in particular remains etched in my memory. He shared with me his deep struggles—shock, depression, and a sense of hopelessness. His medications were destroyed in the fire, and without transportation, he was unable to see his doctor. To make matters worse, he urgently needed to apply for the Special Transportation Service (STS) but couldn't complete the process without his doctor's signature.



I knew I had to act. This wasn't just a crisis of logistics—it was a crisis of the heart. I reached out to the Miami-Dade Independent Living System, and together we arranged transportation and a companion to take him to his doctor's appointment. We also scheduled a mental health counseling session through United Health to support his emotional well-being. To ensure he received his much-needed medications, I coordinated with a pharmacy and the on-site Share Your Heart staff to pick up and deliver his prescriptions.

The gratitude in this gentleman's eyes was overwhelming. In the midst of his turmoil, he found hope again, thanks to the collaboration of state agencies and private organizations who stepped in to lend a hand. It was a moment that reminded me of something powerful: sometimes, it's not just about what we do, but how we do it—with



kindness, love, and a genuine commitment to uplift those who are suffering.

At CARES, we don't just respond to emergencies—we respond with our hearts. And in those moments of connection, even the smallest gesture of kindness can be a lifeline.

Upcoming Medicare Enrollment Options

SHINE Has You Covered!



By Jamila Griffin,
Director of Elder
Protection, SHINE
Program, Florida
Department of
Elder Affairs

The Medicare Open Enrollment Period occurs each year from October 15 to December 7. This is a time of year when you can change the way you access your Medicare coverage. Seniors can join a new Medicare Advantage Plan or a stand-alone prescription drug plan (Part D) and/or switch between Original Medicare with or without a Part D plan and Medicare Advantage.

As you review your Medicare coverage during the annual Open Enrollment Period, you should consider:

- Your access to providers you want to see;
- Your access to preferred pharmacies;
- Your access to benefits and services you need; and
- The total costs for premiums, deductibles, and cost sharing amounts.

About SHINE Assistance

The last change made during Medicare's annual Open Enrollment Period will take



effect on January 1. If you have questions or need more information about your Medicare options, please call **1-800-963-5337** and ask for a SHINE counselor. You may also contact SHINE on its website at floridashine.org/Contact-Us.aspx.

SHINE provides free, unbiased health insurance counseling and information to elders and their caregivers. Through a statewide network of trained SHINE counselors, individuals with Medicare-related questions and issues can receive personal and confidential assistance.

Am I Eligible for This Enrollment?

You can only use this enrollment period if you have a Medicare Advantage Plan. Before making any changes, make sure you know how changing health and drug coverage will affect you, such as if you switch to Original Medicare and want to purchase a Medigap. Depending on where you live, you may be able to buy a Medigap policy, which helps pay Original Medicare costs. Limitations apply as to who can buy a Medigap and when. For more information, contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program

(SHIP). You can find contact information for your SHIP at floridashine.org.

When Will the Changes Occur?

Changes made during this period are effective the first day of the following month. For example, if you switch from a Medicare Advantage Plan to Original Medicare and a stand-alone Part D plan on February 10, your new coverage will begin March 1.

The SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) program supports the Florida Department of Elder Affairs' mission by providing free and unbiased health insurance counseling through a dedicated network of volunteers, empowering Florida seniors to make informed health care choices. For more information, visit FloridaShine.org.



FROM CAMPUS TO CAREER

Continuing the Fight Against Alzheimer's



*By Justine Dempsey,
External Affairs
Manager, Florida
Department of
Elder Affairs*

While attending the University of Florida, I became more aware of the challenges facing various groups in society. It all began through my involvement with my sorority, Sigma Kappa, whose main philanthropy is the Alzheimer's Association. Engaging with this organization opened my eyes to the challenges faced by individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and their families.

One of the most impactful experiences I've had is participating in the Walk to End Alzheimer's each year. This annual event brings together thousands of participants united by a common goal: to raise awareness and funds to combat this devastating disease. I vividly remember my first time attending, feeling the excitement and camaraderie among participants, with each step symbolizing hope for a future free from Alzheimer's. Hearing the stories from families affected by the disease made the cause feel personal and motivated me to make a difference.

A powerful symbol at the Walk is the garden of flowers, each color representing different experiences with Alzheimer's.

- **Yellow** signifies support for someone living with the disease
- **Purple** honors those who have passed.
- **Blue** represents individuals currently living with Alzheimer's
- **Orange** shows support for the cause.

We aim to one day have a white flower in this garden, signifying the first survivor of Alzheimer's and the hope for a future without this disease. This vision inspires us to continue making progress in research, support, and awareness.

After graduation, my professional life took me in a different direction, far removed from Alzheimer's advocacy. However, I now find myself in a full-circle moment, where my personal passion for supporting those affected by Alzheimer's has intersected with my career, allowing me to make a meaningful impact in this vital area.

Today, I am proud to have recently joined the Florida Department of Elder Affairs as the External Affairs Manager. Although my time here has been brief, I am already energized by the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of seniors, particularly those living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

Participating in the Walk to End Alzheimer's continues to be a cherished tradition for me, one that I look forward to every year as a meaningful way to support the cause and connect with others who share this commitment. It's incredibly rewarding to connect my past activism with my current role, bridging the gap between grassroots efforts and professional service.

As I lace up my walking shoes each year, I reflect on how far I've come – from a college student eager to make a difference to a professional committed to improving the lives of seniors in Florida. The Walk serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggle against Alzheimer's, while also symbolizing hope and resilience within our community.

In this journey, I've learned that advocacy takes many forms. Whether through raising awareness, providing support, or developing



policies that benefit seniors, every effort counts. I am grateful for how my involvement in college led me to a role where I can continue this important work. I'm proud to be part of this journey and can't wait to see what we can accomplish.

The Alzheimer's Association Brain Bus

Reaching Rural and High-Risk Communities



*Jennifer Braisted,
Director of
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Affairs, Alzheimer's
Association Florida
Chapters*

Florida has become a dream destination for retirees across the country, but with age comes new challenges, including the risk of Alzheimer's disease. This progressive brain condition affects memory, thinking, and behavior, and Florida ranks second in the nation for the number of residents living with it. In fact, about one in eight Floridians aged 65 and older is affected.

To better serve those impacted, the Brain Bus was launched through a partnership between the Alzheimer's Association, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and the Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida, thanks to funding from Governor Ron DeSantis, a dedicated advocate for Florida's seniors.

The Brain Bus consists of two mobile units traveling statewide, bringing vital information and assistance to local communities affected by Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. In the past fiscal year, the Brain Bus program made over 345 stops across all 67 Florida counties, reaching nearly 9,000 residents.

Services provided by the Brain Bus include:

- **Recognizing the Warning Signs**

The early signs of Alzheimer's aren't always obvious, but they're crucial to identify. The Brain Bus staff can help you recognize these signs and guide you on the next steps to take.



- **Caregiver Support and Tips** Caring for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia comes with unique challenges that evolve as the disease progresses. The Brain Bus specialists provide essential tips and support to help caregivers manage the changing demands and prepare for what's ahead.
- **Reducing Risk** Did you know that simple, everyday actions can help protect your brain health and reduce the risk of cognitive decline? The Brain Bus team shares lifestyle habits that may lower your chances of developing Alzheimer's or dementia.
- **Connecting You to Local Resources** Navigating the array of available resources can be overwhelming. The Brain Bus staff can point you to local, state, and federal resources designed to support caregivers and individuals facing Alzheimer's or dementia.

You'll find the Brain Bus at a variety of community locations – from libraries and health clinics to festivals and back-to-school events. Services have no cost and do not require an appointment. You can also



connect with the Brain Bus virtually by visiting [AlzProgramsAnytime.org](https://www.alzprogramsanytime.org).

Want to find a Brain Bus stop near you? Visit [alzfla.org/brainbus](https://www.alzfla.org/brainbus) to learn more!

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH "FRESH FROM FLORIDA"



*By Taylor Mars,
Creative Content
Manager, Florida
Department of
Agriculture and
Consumer Services*

The holiday season is upon us, and whether you're planning festive meals to share with loved ones, searching for healthy recipes to kick off your New Year's resolutions, or simply wanting to know where to find the freshest, local, in-season produce, "Fresh From Florida" has you covered!

What is "Fresh From Florida"?

The "Fresh From Florida" program proudly showcases the best of Florida's home-grown agricultural products, supporting local farmers, ranchers, and fishers. Thanks to Florida's unique climate—often called "America's Winter Garden"—our crops thrive during the cooler months, giving you access to fresh, flavorful food all year long. With partnerships with over 100 grocers across the U.S., Canada, Central America, and Europe, "Fresh From Florida" ensures that the bounty of Florida-grown goodness is always within reach.

From vibrant vegetables to fresh seafood, Florida is home to more than 300 locally sourced commodities. When you choose "Fresh From Florida," you're embracing a world of freshness, flavor, and variety—perfect for every holiday feast or cozy week-night meal.

Explore the Fresh From Florida Website and Club

Finding what's fresh and in-season has never been easier. Simply visit FreshFromFlorida.com to discover which delicious produce is thriving right now in the Sunshine State. There, you'll also find a treasure trove of free

recipes created by Chef Justin Timineri, our award-winning chef, teacher, and author. Chef Justin's culinary philosophy? "Cooking should always be fun, simple, and flavorful."

By joining the Fresh From Florida Club, you unlock even more amazing perks! Save your favorite recipes, design custom menus, share shopping lists with friends and family, and receive a monthly newsletter packed with seasonal tips. Plus, as a member, you can even ask Chef Justin personalized cooking questions. Best of all, membership is free, and signing up is a breeze.

Support Local, Savor the Difference

When you choose "Fresh From Florida" ingredients, you're not just making a great meal—you're supporting the hardworking local farmers who bring you the freshest produce available. Buying local isn't just delicious; it strengthens our communities, preserves Florida's agricultural heritage, and ensures everyone enjoys the highest quality food.

This holiday season, make a difference by filling your table with fresh, in-season ingredients that burst with flavor. That's the Fresh From Florida difference.

Give the Gift of Freshness

What better gift to give this season than healthy, fresh, and delicious food? Head over to [FreshFromFlorida.com](https://www.freshfromflorida.com) today and discover the best that Florida has to offer. From simple-to-follow recipes to fresh ingredients and support from Florida's farming community, you're all set for a memorable meal—whether it's a grand holiday feast or an intimate dinner for two. All it takes is looking for the sunny "Fresh From Florida" logo!



Romaine and Strawberry Salad

Add a burst of Florida sunshine to your holiday table with this fresh and flavorful salad.

INGREDIENTS

Strawberry Vinaigrette

- 4 Florida strawberries, quartered
- 2 tablespoons Florida honey
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2/3 cup olive oil
- Sea salt and fresh ground pepper

Salad

- 8 Florida strawberries, quartered
- 2 heads Florida romaine lettuce, chopped
- 6 ounces goat cheese, crumbled

DIRECTIONS

To make the vinaigrette, blend strawberries, honey, vinegar, olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside or refrigerate until ready to use.

Assemble the salad by combining the romaine lettuce, strawberries, and crumbled goat cheese.

Drizzle with the vinaigrette, toss gently, and serve immediately.

Enjoy the vibrant flavors of Florida with every bite!

Three Proactive Tips for Driving Safely Together



By Gail M. Holley,
Safe Mobility for
Life Program and
Research Manager,
Florida Department
of Transportation,

Age is just a number when it comes to driving safety, but natural age-related changes can affect your skills behind the wheel. For drivers 65 and older, these changes can increase the risk of serious injury in a crash. That's why Florida's Safe Mobility for Life Coalition is committed to reducing fatalities and serious injuries among aging drivers through proactive education. Below are three essential tips to help you stay safe and confident on the road.

Tip #1: Sharpen Your Driving Skills

Staying sharp behind the wheel is key to safe driving. Whether through refresher courses or safety events, you can proactively enhance your driving experience. Here are two ways to keep your skills fresh:

Take a driver safety course. Approved courses not only refresh your skills but may also qualify you for an auto insurance discount. Check with your provider to see if this is an option.

Attend a CarFit event. CarFit offers free, personalized check-ups from trained technicians who ensure you're driving comfortably and safely in your vehicle. It's not a test—it's a chance to identify potential issues and get expert recommendations. To find a CarFit event near you, visit car-fit.org and enter "Florida" in the search box.

Tip #2 Adapt to Change

Roads and traffic laws are constantly evolving. Staying up-to-date is crucial for safe driving. Here are two ways to keep current:

Review the Driver Handbook. The Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles



(FLHSMV) Driver Handbook is updated annually and is your go-to resource for understanding traffic laws, road signs, and signals. Find it online at fdot.info/Driver-Handbook or pick up a copy at your local tax collector's office.

Use the Roadway Safety Tip Cards. These visual guides from the Safe Mobility for Life Coalition explain how to safely navigate roundabouts, flashing yellow arrows, wrong-way driving signals, and red lights. You can access these cards at fdot.info/resourcecenter.

Tip #3: Embrace Learning

It's never too late to learn something new! Take advantage of these free educational resources to improve your driving skills from the comfort of your home:

Evaluate your driving ability. The American Geriatrics Society offers an interactive Older

Driver Safety Questionnaire. Based on your answers, you'll receive suggestions to share with your healthcare provider. Check it out at healthinaging.org/driving-safety.

Subscribe to "The Insider". Stay informed with our newsletter, which covers everything you need to know about safe mobility and maintaining your driving independence. Sign up to get it delivered to your mailbox or read it online at fdot.info/insider.

Need assistance or more resources? Call the Safe Mobility for Life Resource Center at 1-833-930-2952, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for free materials and guidance.

Take charge of your driving safety with these proactive tips. For more resources, follow us on social media! Find us at @SafeMobilityFL on Facebook and Instagram and continue your journey to staying safe behind the wheel.

Beware of Imposter Scams

Protect Yourself from Fraud



By Mark Meadows,
Inspector, Office of
Inspector General,
Florida Department
of Elder Affairs

Imposter scams occur when a fraudster contacts a victim, pretending to be a representative from their bank. These scammers often claim to be from the bank's security department, stating that they have detected suspicious activity on the victim's account. Using smooth-talking tactics, the fraudsters convince the victim to provide information under the guise of "verifying" their account.

In reality, the victim is unknowingly handing over all the details the scammer needs to access the account and steal their money.

Consumers can protect themselves by understanding that no legitimate financial institution will ever call to request account numbers, personal identification numbers (PINs), or other sensitive information for verification.

Tips to Avoid Fraud

Beware of "spoofed" phone numbers. Scammers can manipulate caller ID to make it appear as though the call or text is from your bank. They use this trick to convince people to share personal or financial information or send money.



Don't trust caller ID alone. Even if the caller ID shows the name of your financial institution, it could still be a scam. When in doubt, hang up and call your bank directly using a verified number.

Verify the source. If you're unsure whether you're speaking to a legitimate representative, call the number on the back of your debit or credit card or visit a local branch.

Protect your personal information. Never share account details, passwords, or

one-time passcodes with anyone who contacts you unexpectedly.

Double-check before sending money. Always verify who you're sending money to, as it may be impossible to recover the funds once transferred.

If you become the victim of an imposter scam or any other fraudulent activity, report it immediately to your local law enforcement agency.

Nourish Yourself, Nurture Others



By Jayda Jefferson
MS, MPH, FCCM,
Senior Farmers'
Market Nutrition
Program Coordinator,
Florida Department
of Elder Affairs

Caring for aging loved ones is a deeply fulfilling journey that fosters connection and joy. Yet, it's easy for caregivers to become so immersed in their role that they forget to take care of themselves. To give your best to others, you need to nourish your own well-being. This guide is all about supporting caregivers—helping you stay healthy, energized, and equipped to care for your loved ones with compassion and resilience.

Prioritize Your Health

It's easy to overlook your own health when you're focused on someone else's needs, but self-care is vital to prevent burnout. Here are some simple ways to stay on top of your health:

Keep Up with Checkups Just as you prioritize your loved one's health, ensure you're scheduling regular doctor visits for yourself.

Eat Well Balanced meals are key to maintaining your energy. Try incorporating whole grains, lean proteins, and plenty of fruits and vegetables. Meal prep can save time—cook in batches for convenience.

Stay Active Incorporate movement into your day, whether it's a short morning walk



or light stretching while you're with your loved one.

Protect Your Mental Health

Caring for your emotional well-being is just as important as your physical health. Consider these tips for safeguarding your mental wellness:

Take "Me Time" Even 10 minutes of quiet reflection can help you recharge.

Set Boundaries Don't be afraid to say "no" when you're feeling overwhelmed.

It's crucial to set limits that protect your well-being.

Talk to a Professional If you're feeling overwhelmed, talking to a counselor or therapist can help manage feelings of anxiety, depression, or stress.

As a caregiver, your role is invaluable, but remember, you can't pour from an empty cup. Taking care of yourself enables you to give your best to others. Self-care isn't selfish—it's a lifeline for both you and the ones you love.



Help Shape the Future of Aging in Florida!

Calling for Your Input! The Florida Department of Elder Affairs values the voices of our fellow Floridians, especially those of older adults, their families, and caregivers. As we develop our next four-year State Plan on Aging, we invite you to share your thoughts on the opportunities, challenges, and concerns facing our senior community. Your input is essential in shaping the future of aging services in Florida!



Take a few minutes to complete our brief survey and make your voice heard at forms.office.com/g/jqghVkFmAG or scan the QR code above with a smart phone.

Black Bean Fajita Skillet

This quick and flavorful Black Bean Fajita Skillet is a caregiver's best friend—ready in just 15 minutes and packed with nutrients to keep you going! Serves 2.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 bell peppers, sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed
- ½ teaspoon salt-free/low-sodium taco or fajita seasoning blend
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
- 1 cup dry rice (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

Add sliced bell peppers and onion, sautéing for about 10 minutes until tender.

Stir in black beans, seasoning, and salt, and cook for 1 more minute until heated through.

Divide into bowls and sprinkle with cheese if desired.

For Rice (Optional)

Rinse 1 cup of rice under cold water.

In a pot, bring 2 cups of water and a pinch of salt to a boil.

Stir in rice, reduce heat to low, cover, and cook for 18-20 minutes until water is absorbed.

Remove from heat, let sit for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork.

Florida Swimmer Travels Many Roads and Swims in Many Pools



By Nick Gandy, Florida Sports Foundation

What began as a personal goal to swim at all 20 plus Florida Senior Games events has evolved into a national—and possibly soon international—adventure for Dale Charette, a determined athlete from The Villages.

Charette's love for swimming dates back to his high school days, but it was a 2018 shoulder surgery that reignited his passion for the sport. During rehabilitation, his old butterfly stroke form naturally returned. One day at the pool, Dale asked his wife, Gail, to time his 50-meter butterfly, and the result amazed him. It reminded him of his prowess as a high school swimmer.

In the fall of 2019, while living in Jacksonville, Dale signed up for the Jacksonville Senior Games, winning four gold medals. "I was hooked again," he recalled, speaking while traveling across the country to his son's wedding in Central California. His passion for the sport had fully rekindled.

So much so, that Dale began planning swimming stops along his travel route, joining Masters Swimming groups at different locations. "I swam with a group in Alabama at a YMCA," he said. "I also joined workouts in Little Rock, Oklahoma City, and several other places as I made my way across the U.S."

Following the wedding, Dale competed in the prestigious Huntsman World Senior Games in Utah in October, which draws over 10,000 athletes from around the globe. This marked his third national event, having competed in the 2023 National Senior



Games in Pittsburgh, and the Pan American Masters Games in Cleveland in the summer of 2024.

As a licensed chiropractor with over 30 years of experience, Dale understands the benefits of staying active, particularly for seniors. In his now limited role as a practitioner, he advises fellow senior athletes to listen to their bodies. "It's important to know your limits and gradually increase your training at your own pace," he emphasizes.

Charette acknowledges that every senior athlete is different, and pacing oneself is key. Thanks to his commitment to swimming,

and Gail's dedication to running, their workouts have become a way of life, with Florida Senior Games and National Senior Games becoming staples in their schedules.

"I'm in better shape now than I was 20 years ago," Dale proudly shared. Now competing in the 60-64 age group, his motivation to outdo his younger self keeps him going. He's already set his sights on the 2024 Florida Senior Games, with the goal of qualifying for the 2025 National Senior Games in Des Moines, Iowa.

But Dale's ambitions don't stop there. "I want to try something international," he revealed.

"The World Masters Games are held in countries you've probably never even heard of." The next edition of the Games will take place in May 2025 in Taipei and New Taipei City, Taiwan. While a trip to Taiwan may be too soon to plan, Dale is already eyeing the 2027 edition.

With plenty of time ahead, Dale Charette remains determined to swim in every Florida Senior Games event, join more Masters Swimming groups across the country, and perhaps even dive into international waters.



Moving with Balance: How Exercise Helps Prevent Falls



By Gretta Jones,
Health and Wellness
Coordinator, Florida
Department of
Elder Affairs

Feeling unsteady or fearing a fall can happen at any age, but it's especially common as we grow older. Falls can be costly, both in terms of health and finances. However, contrary to popular belief, falling is not an inevitable part of aging. Falls often happen due to factors like medication side effects, balance issues, and chronic health conditions. The good news is that regular exercise can help restore some of the muscle strength and flexibility we lose with age, which can greatly reduce the risk of falls and improve overall well-being.

Get Moving to Stay Balanced

Whether it's just a little or a lot, incorporating exercise into your daily routine can significantly reduce the risk of falling. Physical activity helps maintain independence by strengthening your muscles and improving your range of motion. Staying active is also great for your social health, as it connects you with others. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), getting at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week can lower the risk of falls, reduce blood pressure, and improve cholesterol levels.

Try an "Exercise Snack"

If jumping into a full workout feels overwhelming, start small with "Exercise Snacks." These are short bursts of physical activity that can be woven into your daily routine. For example, instead of getting up from your chair once, try standing up and sitting down

five times in a row. Take the stairs whenever possible, or enjoy a casual stroll with a few quick-paced intervals. These simple movements require no equipment and are easy to fit into your day.

Ideas to Get Moving

- Gardening or yard work
- Joining an exercise class or working out at home
- Dancing
- Walking or cycling with a friend
- Swimming or water aerobics
- Playing with your grandchildren

Five Easy Ways to Stay Strong and Prevent Falls

According to the National Council on Aging, here are five tips to help you stay strong and find balance programs in your community:

Stick to Your Routine: If a physical therapist has recommended exercises for fall prevention, be sure to follow through with them consistently.

Tap into Local Resources: Contact your Area Agency on Aging's Elder Helpline at 1-800-963-5337 to ask about evidence-based health and wellness programs proven to improve balance and strength. Programs like A Matter of Balance, Bingocize, Enhance Fitness, and Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance are excellent options.

Visit Your Local Senior Center: Senior centers often offer a wide range of activities and programs designed to support healthy aging. They're a great place to explore falls prevention programs in a supportive, social environment.

Bring a Friend: Trying something new can be intimidating, but having a friend or caregiver join you makes it more fun and keeps you motivated!

Explore Online Options: Many balance and exercise programs are now available



online, so you can stay active without even leaving home.

With a little movement each day, you can improve your strength, boost your balance, and reduce the risk of falls—keeping you active and independent for years to come.

All in a Day's Work at CARES



By Lisa Price, CARES Region 1 Program Supervisor, Florida Department of Elder Affairs

In the early hours of August 5th, Hurricane Debby struck Florida's

Big Bend, leaving a trail of devastation as it barreled through Steinhatchee. The storm's fury resulted in widespread destruction, claiming 10 lives and causing an estimated \$2 billion in damage. Yet, amidst the devastation, stories of resilience, teamwork, and hope began to emerge.

By Wednesday, August 7th, the Department of Elder Affairs' CARES Division was already on the front lines. Two of our team members were dispatched to the Suwannee County Special Needs Shelter to assist with discharge planning, following a request for help from the Department of Health. Special Needs Shelters, equipped with medical professionals and auxiliary power, provide essential care to vulnerable citizens during disasters—those whose needs exceed the capacity of general shelters.

When our CARES team arrived at the shelter, only one evacuee remained, unable to return home due to extensive storm damage. But this wasn't just any evacuee—this man had significant medical challenges and required a highly specialized facility. What followed was nothing short of a marathon effort to find him a safe, appropriate placement.

Our team in the Alachua office immediately sprang into action, contacting every nursing facility in the area. Time and again,



the answer was the same: no one had the necessary equipment to meet his needs. Undeterred, we expanded the search to Tallahassee, Ocala, and eventually across the entire state, from Pensacola to Jacksonville to Largo. Hundreds of calls were made, each potential lead raising our hopes, only to be dashed when two facilities backed out at the last minute.

But the CARES team didn't give up. Determined, we collaborated with the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Department of Health. Finally, a breakthrough came. The man was successfully transferred to a hospital in Gainesville, where he could receive the critical care he so urgently needed.

This wasn't just the story of one evacuee—it was a story of the unwavering commitment of three state agencies and CARES staff from eight regions, all working together with a singular purpose. Everyone involved—emotionally and professionally—was invested in ensuring this man's safety and well-being.

As a regional supervisor with over 20 years of service at the Department of Elder Affairs and CARES, I am deeply proud to work alongside such a remarkable team. Their dedication, compassion, and determination to serve those in need are truly inspiring. At CARES, we don't just do our jobs—we change lives, one person at a time.

Sudoku Puzzles

Solutions found on page 21.

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Navigating Grief During the Holidays

A Guide for Seniors



*Justine Dempsey,
External Affairs
Manager, Florida
Department of
Elder Affairs*

As the holiday season approaches, many seniors may find themselves grappling with feelings of grief and loss. This time of year, often filled with joyous celebrations and family gatherings, can also serve as a poignant reminder of loved ones who are no longer present. If you or someone you know is facing these challenges, know that you are not alone. Below are some tips and insights to help you navigate grief while still embracing the warmth and spirit of the holidays.

Tips for Coping with Grief

Acknowledge Your Feelings Allow yourself to experience your emotions without judgment. It's okay to feel sad or nostalgic; these feelings are part of the grieving process.

Create New Traditions While it can be comforting to maintain old traditions, consider creating new ones that honor your loved ones. This could be as simple as lighting a candle in their memory or starting a new holiday meal that reminds you of them.

Stay Connected Reach out to friends, family, or support groups. Sharing your feelings with others who understand can provide comfort and reduce feelings of isolation.



Give Back Engaging in acts of kindness or volunteering can help shift focus from your grief to the joy of helping others. This can also be a way to keep the spirit of your loved one alive.

Set Realistic Expectations The holidays don't have to be perfect. It's okay to scale back on plans or skip certain events if they feel overwhelming. Prioritize self-care and choose activities that bring you joy.

Seek Professional Support If your grief feels unmanageable, consider talking to a counselor or therapist. Professional support can provide valuable tools for coping and healing.

Finding Hope and Healing in the Holiday Season

The holidays, while sometimes challenging, can also be an opportunity for remembrance, connection, and even joy. By acknowledging your emotions, leaning on your support system, and creating meaningful new traditions, you can face this season with strength and grace. Remember, it's okay to take things one step at a time. Reach out, embrace the love around you, and allow yourself to find moments of peace as you journey through this season of both reflection and renewal.

Ask an Ombudsman

Volunteers advocating for Florida's long-term care residents answer your questions regarding the health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents in long-term care facilities.



*By Terri Cantrell,
State Ombudsman,
Long-Term Care
Ombudsman Program,
Florida Department
of Elder Affairs*

Question: What is a Long-Term Care Ombudsman?

A Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a specially trained and certified volunteer with the authority, under both federal and state law, to identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents in long-term care facilities. Ombudsmen handle a wide range of resident concerns, from issues related to medication and care administration to matters involving dignity and respect. Their role is to protect the legal rights of residents, ensuring they receive proper treatment and quality care.

The assistance provided by an ombudsman is often a source of comfort for residents. Our volunteers offer free, confidential, and personalized help, striving to resolve concerns with warmth, professionalism, and a commitment to advocacy.

Question: What should I do if I have a concern about long-term care?

Anyone can raise a concern about long-term care, whether you're a resident, relative,



friend, facility staff member, legal representative, or a concerned citizen. Complaints may involve the facility, its staff, or any individual or agency that threatens or violates a resident's rights, health, safety, or welfare.

Complaints filed with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program remain entirely confidential unless the resident or complainant grants permission to disclose information. Once a complaint is filed, it is documented, and a local ombudsman is assigned to investigate. The ombudsman contacts the complainant or resident within seven calendar days to begin a thorough investigation. After gathering all the facts, the

ombudsman advocates for the best possible solution to resolve the issue and ensure the resident's satisfaction.

To ask for an ombudsman's assistance, learn more about the program, or to become a volunteer ombudsman, call toll-free at 1-888-831-0404 or email LTCOPinformer@elderaffairs.org.



**Long-Term Care
Ombudsman
Program** FLORIDA



It's Time to SHINE

Whether you are a senior with Medicare questions or you are looking for a new volunteer opportunity, it is time to call our SHINE Program. We provide unbiased Medicare and health insurance information. SHINE's volunteer counselors are committed to helping you make informed choices about your Medicare benefits. All counseling is confidential, and SHINE's services are free to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers.

If you are interested in being a SHINE counselor, you can help seniors by:

- Explaining Medicare benefits;
- Describing the difference between Medicare Prescription Drug plans;
- Answering questions about Medigap and other health insurance programs;
- Assisting with claims, appeals, and other Medicare issues;
- Identifying other local benefits and programs; and
- Offering educational presentations.

Bilingual Volunteers Are Always Needed!



SHINE
SHIP | SMP FLORIDA

FloridaShine.org
1-800-96-ELDER
(1-800-963-5337)

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS PUZZLE ONE

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PUZZLE TWO

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Utility Problems? Contact the Florida Public Service Commission!



*By Kelly Thompson,
Regulatory Program
Administrator,
Florida Public Service
Commission*

Facing utility issues can be stressful, especially when you don't know where to turn. Whether it's a power outage, a problem with your water service, or a confusing utility bill, the uncertainty of how to fix it can be overwhelming. But don't worry – there's a solution at hand.

The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) is here to help! As the regulatory authority over the state's investor-owned electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater industries (across 40 counties), as well as certain telecommunications services, the PSC is your go-to resource when utility frustrations arise.

The PSC's Bureau of Consumer Assistance has a team of dedicated analysts who are ready to listen and help. They work with you to review utility bills, verify charges, and settle disputes between customers and their utility companies. Whether you need advice on payment plans, details on the laws governing utility companies, or updates on pending cases, the PSC team has your back.

To get started on resolving your utility concerns, you can fill out an easy online complaint form at [FloridaPSC.com](https://www.floridapsc.com) or call 1-800-342-3552.

So, the next time a utility issue throws you off, don't stress. The Florida Public Service Commission is just a call or click away, ready to turn your frustrations into solutions!



Connect With the Elder Helpline

Local Resources and Assistance

Florida's Aging Network

Through our 11 Area Agencies on Aging, we offer a wide variety of assistance programs and activities. Area Agencies on Aging are the designated private non-profit entities that advocate, plan, coordinate, and fund a system of elder support services in their respective Planning and Service Areas (PSAs).

The Elder Helpline

The AAAs operate a statewide network of 11 local Elder Helplines. Our Elder Helpline is ready to connect you with anything from caregiver assistance, meal programs, and

health care counseling to group exercise programs, volunteer opportunities, and even computer classes! Individuals and community agencies seeking accurate, unbiased information about federal, state, or local social, health, and human services in their area may access the Elder Helpline by calling toll-free **1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337)** or the county-specific Elder Helpline listed below.

Call our Elder Helpline today and speak with a real person! We are here to connect you to a multitude of resources and opportunities to promote vibrant and fulfilling lifestyles.

Other Assistance

1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

Are you worried that an elder may be the victim of abuse? You can make a confidential report by calling Florida's Abuse Hotline.

Senior Legal Helpline 1-888-895-7873

For legal assistance specific to seniors, you can call the Florida Senior Legal Helpline. This helpline provides free civil legal advice and brief services over the telephone to eligible Florida residents 60 years and older (*income guidelines apply*).

Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging

Serving Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties

Phone: 850-494-7101

Elder Helpline:

866-531-8011

nwflaaa.org



Advantage Aging Solutions

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, Wakulla, and Washington Counties

Phone: 850-488-0055

Elder Helpline:

866-467-4624

advantageaging.org



Elder Options

Serving Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Lake, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Sumter, Suwannee, and Union Counties

Phone: 352-378-6649

Elder Helpline:

800-262-2243

agingresources.org



ElderSource

Serving Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns, and Volusia Counties

Phone: 904-391-6600

Elder Helpline:

888-242-4464

myeldersource.org



Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas

Serving Pasco and Pinellas Counties

Phone: 727-570-9696

Elder Helpline:

727-217-8111

agingcarefl.org



Senior Connection Center

Serving Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, and Polk Counties

Phone: 813-740-3888

Elder Helpline:

800-336-2226

seniorconnectioncenter.org



Senior Resource Alliance

Serving Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties

Phone: 407-514-1800

Elder Helpline:

407-514-0019

seniorresourcealliance.org



Area Agency on Aging for Southwest Florida

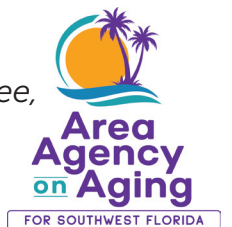
Serving Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee, and Sarasota Counties

Phone: 239-652-6900

Elder Helpline:

866-413-5337

aaaswfl.org



Your Aging and Disability Resource Center

Serving Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie Counties

Phone: 561-684-5885

Elder Helpline:

866-684-5885

aaapbtc.org



Area Agency on Aging of Broward County

Serving Broward County

Phone: 954-745-9567

Elder Helpline:

954-745-9779

adrcbroward.org



Alliance for Aging

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties

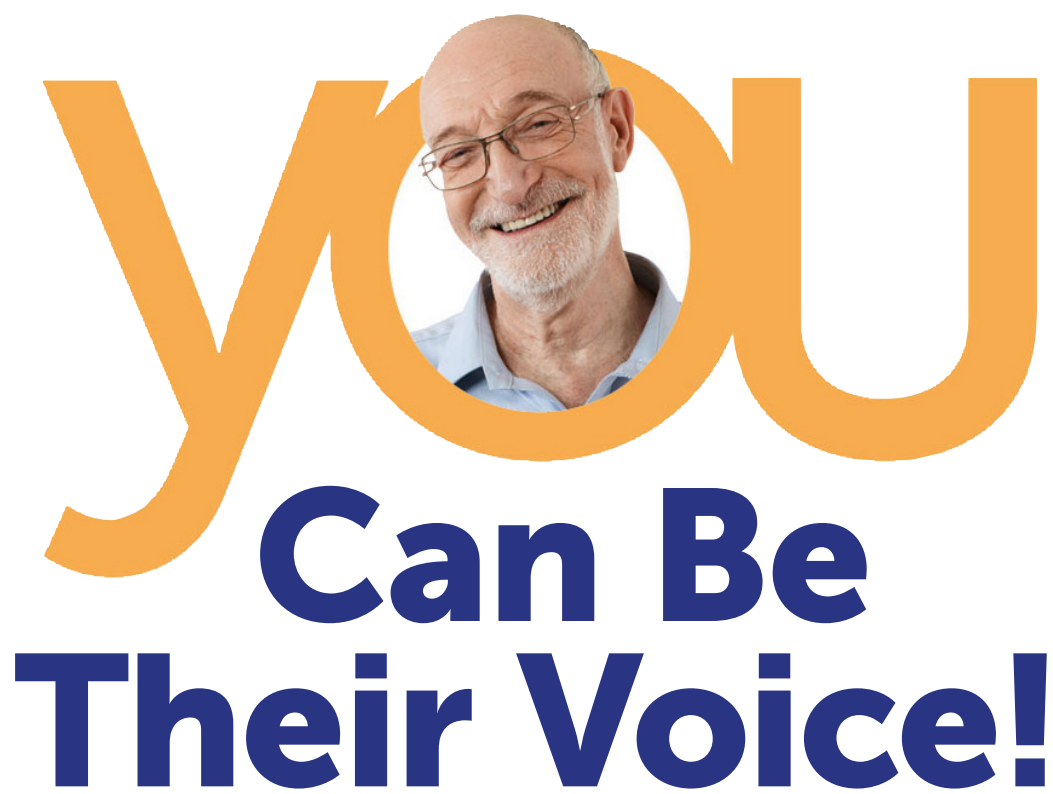
Phone: 305-670-6500

Elder Helpline:

305-670-4357

allianceforaging.org

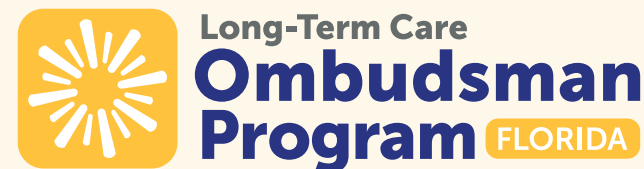




you Can Be Their Voice!

JOIN US TODAY

Become a volunteer ombudsman and advocate for the rights of long-term care residents.



OMBUDSMAN.ELDERAFFAIRS.ORG | 1-888-831-0404



How to Get Your *Aging Outlook*

The *Aging Outlook* is published twice per year and is available digitally via email and our website. Printed copies are limited and only provided through our partner agencies. Please contact your local Area Agency on Aging (found on page 23) for a printed copy. To subscribe to the digital copy, visit elderaffairs.org.