

## Perspectives of Leaders, Supporters, Seniors and Participants

Visibility has always been vital to Senior Connections' existence. In 1986, Barbara Lea-Kruger was hired as the Agency's information officer to help build awareness among seniors, caregivers and the community at large. During her 13-year tenure, "We were trying to get across that we were the resource, and if we couldn't help them (seniors), we could find someone who could." Disseminating that message through media relations; the Agency's newsletter, *Mature Life*; and other communications, Lea-Kruger helped launch initiatives such as ElderHomes (now project: HOMES), Friendship Cafés, and the Agency handling its own fundraising.



Barbara Lea-Kruger

### Francine Blum



Francine Blum

In 1987, Francine Blum combined her teaching degree with her experience in geriatrics to become the second manager of the Foster Grandparent Program. In this program, seniors are connected with special needs children for mentorship, tutoring and caregiving, and in return, receive a tax-free stipend—and a special relationship that benefits both child and senior. While serving in this role (1987 to 2009), Blum found that not only were more and more seniors volunteering, but many seniors were also remaining in the program longer than they initially anticipated. "Some would start in their 60s and continue with the program until their health didn't permit it," she explains. "Not only that . . . once they became a Foster Grandparent, many seniors would make friends and discover other programs that interested them, remaining connected to Senior Connections for the rest of their lives."

### Gloria Johnson

In her long service on the Senior Connections Board (a partial term in the '80s and from 2001 to present), Gloria Johnson, a member appointed by the Henrico County Board of Supervisors, has seen

much transition and evolution in the Agency. Two changes she feels to be key to Senior Connections' growth have been the name change in 2000: from The Capital Area Agency on Aging to Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging, and the building in 1993: from Clay Street to its new location on Cary Street. She says both of these improvements have allowed Senior Connections to provide more programs to seniors and as a result, more impact in the community. Formerly involved in motivating young people as an educator, Mrs. Johnson has been a strong force in inspiring seniors at the other end of their lives. "Our mission is to encourage and empower seniors to improve and maintain their quality of life," she says. "We want seniors to live independently and with dignity and choices."



Gloria Johnson

### Sharon Brewer

Before moving to Virginia, Sharon Brewer taught computer, social science and life skills at an alternative high school in California. She was accustomed to giving back. So when she and her husband came to Richmond in 2003, they both joined the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Advisory Council and have served as consultants for the Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Employment Program (SEP) and the Friendship Café. She has also volunteered with a number of other Agency programs, such as the Focus 50 Plus: Breast Cancer Screening and Education Project and Senior Connections' Choral Group, entertaining residents of nursing homes, retirement communities and even at the Jefferson Hotel at Christmastime. "Senior Connections gives me an opportunity to give," she explains. "After working with young people, I also found I received the same satisfaction, or even more, working with seniors."



Sharon Brewer

## Strategic Goals

### Visibility and Marketing

Create distinctive and recognizable public image of Senior Connections.

- Increase visibility of agency programs and local needs.
- Promote/enhance positive images of aging and community issues.

### Programs and Services

Increase development and delivery of comprehensive and collaborative programs using person-centered practices to address the short and long term needs of older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers.

- Provide effective programs and services that respond to current and changing needs of older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers.
- Support families and caregivers in their efforts to care for loved ones in the community.
- Promote community engagement and strengthen the capacity of Agency Volunteer Programs.
- Engage with staff from multiple health systems and other appropriate collaborators to pursue opportunities for more effective care transitions to community settings and reduce hospital readmissions.

### Funding and Resources

Develop diverse, sustainable funding sources while continuing strong stewardship of all resources.

- Review and evaluate existing fundraising strategies.
- Identify, assess and prioritize fundraising strategies based on program needs.
- Develop fundraising strategies to appeal to a diversity of donors.

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## With Age Comes Change . . . The Evolution of Senior Connections: 40 Years of Progress

### "Reflecting on the Past, Celebrating the Present and Looking to the Future"

Our Agency has enjoyed a long and rich history from its beginnings in 1973 as The Capital Area Agency on Aging. Our office was on 6th Street and we have grown to our current operations as Senior Connections in our present building on East Cary Street. As we reflect on the past 40 years, we recognize the tens of thousands of seniors and caregivers who turned to us for assistance with services and information. We honor the thousands of volunteers who have supported our mission of "empowering seniors to live with dignity and choice" and our vision for a community of "seniors with improved quality of life." We value the hundreds of community partners that have enriched our history by collaborating with us on ideas and resource sharing. We thank the multitude of funders at the local, state, and national levels and are grateful for the generous private funding as well as donations and fees from many participants.

Over these four decades, we have enjoyed tremendous leadership from numerous individuals who have served as our Executive Directors, Board of Directors, Advisory Councils and Planning Groups. We wish to thank all of the current and past leaders including the first Board officers in 1975: Mr. Upton S. Martin, Ms. Joan Girone, Mr. Charles Dobson and Ms. Lucy G. Crockin as well as the officers for 2013-2015: Mr. John Robertson, Mr. Felix Sarfo-kantanka, Jr., Mrs. Gloria Johnson and Mr. Thomas Deadmore. Along the way, we have been fortunate to have passionate, knowledgeable and skilled staff managing programs and delivering services. This tradition makes the Agency effective and promotes growth.

Celebrating the milestone of our 40th Anniversary is also a time to look ahead and plan for the Agency's future. Senior Connections has embarked upon a five-year Strategic Plan that reflects today's trends and the future environment. We are also actively engaged with community partners to address the continued aging of our population and to create livable communities for individuals of all ages.

We look forward to continuing to evolve with the world around us, overcoming challenges and embracing new opportunities along the way. As we serve, advocate and educate, Senior Connections will continue to make a profound impact on seniors and caregivers, and the community at large, for many years to come.

Best wishes and thanks to all,  
Thelma Bland Watson, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



## The Last 40 Years . . . How We Have Grown!

**1973**  
The Richmond Area Community Council and the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission authorize the establishment of The Capital Area Agency on Aging.

**1974**  
The Nutrition Program (Congregate Meals) is the Agency's first service. With five meal sites, the Home-Delivered Meals Program is launched.  
  
First Agency Executive Director, Retired Colonel Louis Barretta, is hired.

**1975**  
First Board of Directors appointed.  
  
The Senior Discount Program begins.

**1976**  
Mary Payne begins service as the first Long-Term Ombudsman in Virginia.

**1977**  
SPECTRAN Transportation begins operation.

**2000 - 2013**  
Independent Financial Management Compliance Audits are completed without findings or recommendations.

Agency receives grants to address critical needs from local governments, the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, The Community Foundation, Altria, Dominion, Genworth, Owens & Minor, The United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia Center on Aging at VCU, Greater Richmond Transit Authority and other funders.

**1998**

The Money Management Program partners with AARP to facilitate volunteer recruitment and insurance coverage.

**2000**  
RSVP transitions from the United Way to Senior Connections.

The Capital Area Agency on Aging adds "Senior Connections" to its name.

**2002**

Dr. Thelma Watson is named the Agency's fourth executive director.

Agency completes Five-Year Strategic Plan.

**2005**

The Public Guardian Program is initiated with a state-funded grant administered by the Virginia Department for the Aging.

**2007**

Agency receives grants from Dominion, Altria (Philip Morris), Genworth, the Community Foundation and the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation

In 1965, the federal Older Americans Act created home and community services to support the independence of older adults. As a result of that legislation and local actions, The Capital Area Agency on Aging was founded in 1973. Over the past 40 years, Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging (the name the Agency adopted in 2000) has served the City of Richmond as well as the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan with rural communities surrounding Virginia's Capital, and the second largest population of seniors in Virginia. As an umbrella program, the Agency provides more than 24 services to seniors in conjunction with numerous community partners.

Doing the past 40 years, the Agency has provided:

- 4,747,320 Home-Delivered Meals**
- 2,057,240 Friendship Café Lunches**
- 100,670 Volunteer Hours**
- 634,600 Information and Assistance Contacts**
- 1,808,080 Senior Employment Hours**

## A FUTURE FILLED WITH PLANS AND PROMISE

While Senior Connections has made great strides in the past 40 years, there is so much more that can be done to support the diverse—and growing—population of seniors and caregivers in the Richmond area. In the coming years, we strive to develop programs that respond directly to the needs and desires of seniors, improve the resources offered to caregivers, create more livable communities for all ages, advocate for policies that support successful aging, and continue to educate on key issues.

However, for our actions to have the fullest impact possible in the community, seniors, caregivers, community partners and potential funders—everyone—must first know about us. As we look to our future, one of our main objectives is to create a distinct and recognizable image for the Agency in the community. With this higher profile, the Agency will have more visibility, which, in turn, will broaden the reach of our programs.

On the strength of our past, Senior Connections will build our future and the futures of those we serve.

## Perspectives of Leaders, Supporters, Seniors and Participants

### Reverend James Payne and Mary Payne

As the longest-serving Executive Director of Senior Connections (1981 to 1998), Mary Payne's strength was in building a team of confident and committed people. "She was an enabler, always seeking to empower and rely on the talents of her staff," says her husband, Reverend James Payne. Payne started as the Director of Community Relations and went on to become the first Long-Term Care Ombudsman in Virginia in 1976. Many of the Agency's most important programs, including ElderHomes (now project:HOMES) and Congregate Meals (now Friendship Cafés) were launched during her 17-year tenure. Payne served so successfully for such an extended period thanks to her passion for the care and support of older people.



Mary C. Payne and John (Jake) Jakubec

### John "Jake" Jakubec

From 1979 to 1999, John "Jake" Jakubec watched Senior Connections become a more encompassing

Agency, working as Community Services Coordinator and then Community Programs Director, supervising the management of such programs as Home-Delivered Meals and Foster Grandparents. He later returned to manage the Computer Resource Center part-time and now provides seniors with one-on-one computer assistance on a volunteer basis. Over the past 30-plus years, he says, "Senior Connections' resources have become more coordinated and blended. As partner agencies, such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, churches, etc., learned about the needs of seniors, they started slanting their programs in a particular direction and even combining them." That synergistic relationship has given Senior Connections a deeper pool of resources to fill needs, troubleshoot problems and provide a better quality of life for seniors.

### Wilda M. Ferguson

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) administers state funding for many of Senior Connections' programs. While this money is integral to the Agency's impact in the community, former Virginia Department for the Aging (the agency that predated DARS) Commissioner Wilda M. Ferguson recognizes that Senior Connections' impact extends far beyond the services funded by these monies. "It (Senior Connections) serves as the conscience of the community," she explains. "It makes the community more attuned to older people and their needs." During her years of service with the state Department for the Aging (1979 to 1989), she witnessed Senior Connections' visibility grow, and its credibility along with it, allowing the Agency to become a stronger advocate for seniors.



Wilda M. Ferguson

### Janet Lenhart

There are many people on the front lines; however, Senior Connections' behind-the-scenes support staff have been just as important to



Janet Lenhart and William Smith in Finance Office

the Agency's growth over the past 40 years. Janet Lenhart started in 1980 as Senior Connections' Bookkeeper and, during her 30 years there, the Agency took advantage of not only her financial skills but also her aptitude to purchase and install their first computers as well as her administrative skills. Lenhart, who personally experienced the benefit of Senior Connections' resources as she cared for her mother and her father-in-law, says, "Senior Connections gives seniors a helping hand when times are tough. It gets them the help they need so they can stand on their own."

### Barbara Lea-Kruger

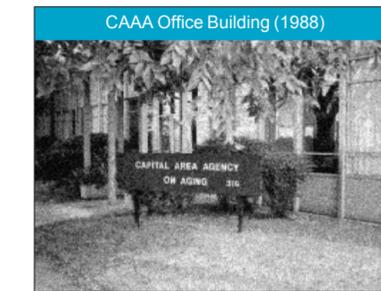
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### Barbara Rubin

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is traumatic enough. But combined with that overwhelming news, Barbara Rubin was also left dealing with how to afford the special care her husband would need. "Paying out the money that we thought we'd be spending on our retirement on tasks like bathing my husband was devastating," she says. Through the Alzheimer's Association, Rubin found out about Senior Connections' Caregiver Respite Support Program, and working with Ginny Becker, In-Home Services Manager, received \$1,000 toward homecare services. From May to December, three to four days a week, Becker scheduled a homecare worker to come into the Rubins' home to help her husband bathe, shave, eat and perform other activities of daily living. "She was a real godsend!" adds Rubin, explaining that this support gave her some much-needed time back—to do the grocery shopping, volunteer at her son's office and even attend luncheons with her friends. Although the original scholarship has been depleted, Mrs. Rubin says that Becker encourages her by keeping her updated on the availability of future funds.

### Mille Phox

A great grandmother herself, Mille Phox started mentoring in the Foster Grandparent Program at the YMCA Downtown Early Learning Center in 2003 because she needed the extra money. But she's found the rewards to be more than monetary ones. "I have become very attached to them (the 4-year-olds she mentors)," says Ms. Phox. The feeling is obviously mutual. When she was out sick for about a month, the children missed her and drew pictures to cheer her up. She also enjoys working with the teachers in the program, who, she says, let her have a "say so" with the children. "If I see something I can help them with, I'll talk to them. They listen to me and often see that I'm right."



L. to R: Thelma Bland, Commissioner, VDA; Harris Spindle, Director of Finance, VDA; Mary Payne, Executive Director, CAAA (1991)



Senior Connections/CAAA Building (2013)



1978

New health screening program results in reduced and eliminated medications for many seniors.

1981

**Mary C. Payne becomes executive director, serving 17 years (the longest serving Executive Director in the Agency's history).**

1982

**The first Guardianship Program is launched.**

The Foster Grandparent Program is launched under the leadership of Kathy Colby. Richmond Foster Grandparents are guests at a White House luncheon to dedicate First Lady Nancy Reagan's book *To Love A Child*.

1984

Agency moves to its first purchased building on 316 E. Clay Street.

1987

A Greater Richmond Community Foundation grant is received for Emergency Home Repair in East Richmond.

1989

Agency contracts with Catholic Charities for Handyman Repair Services.

1990

Foster Grandparent Annette Paul is invited by First Lady Barbara Bush to attend a White House reception, celebrating the Foster Grandparent Program's 25th anniversary.

**1992  
ElderHomes is spun off and is later renamed project:HOMES.**

1993

**Agency purchases the building at 24 East Cary Street, which was originally home to an insurance company. Built in 1967, the modernist-style with convenient parking underneath has trim detail resembling a Japanese tea house.**

Agency adds the Volunteer Money Management Program to its list of programs.

1995

Home Delivered Meals Program receives grants from Colgate Palmolive and Ukrop's Supermarkets as well as financial support from the National Meals on Wheels Foundation's Seniors Helping Hands Campaign funded by Phillip Morris, Inc. (now Altria).

2009

Growing Younger Program is started as a pilot program, expanding to include programs in five Friendship Cafés in partnership with the YMCA with funding from the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg.

2010

Agency receives the first grant from the Virginia Department for the Aging to begin the Chronic Disease Self Management Program (CDSMP), with more than 300 people completing the program in two years.

2011

Foster Grandparent Ms. Barbara Burton participates with a volunteer discussion panel at the Champions of Change volunteer celebration event in Washington, D.C.

2012

Volunteer Money Management Program receives the 2012 Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Award for an Outstanding Community Organization.

The Department for the Aging is made part of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

2013

**Agency receives two awards for innovative programs from the Commonwealth Council on Aging and establishes the first Superior Customer Service Award, "The Bertha M. Anderson Award," for Agency Employees.**

Agency receives second grant from the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services to continue the CDSMP.