

February 2021

ELDER *Update*

*Support,
Engage, &
Impact With*
iGEN

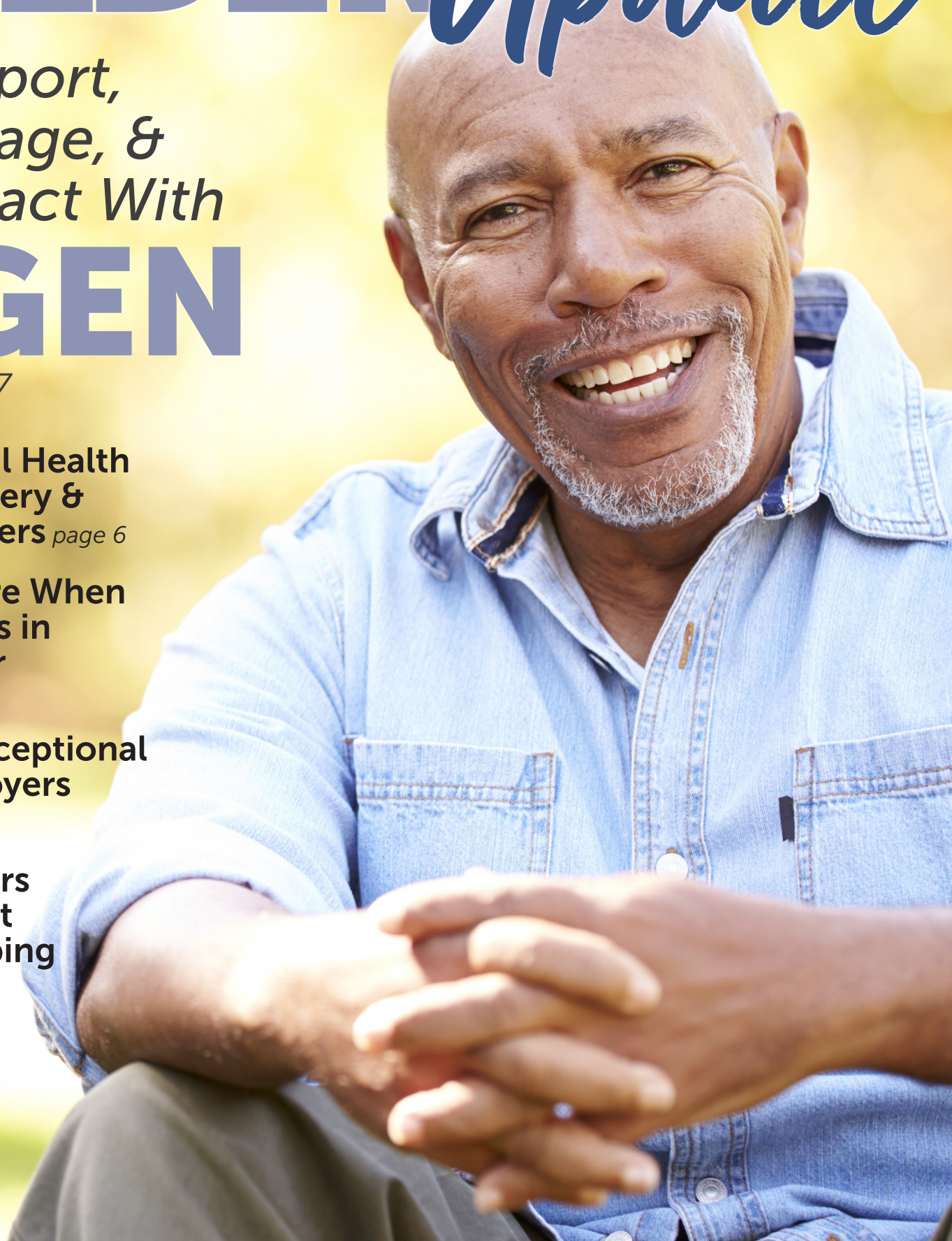
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THE ELDER HELPLINE

Information and referrals for elder services are available through the Elder Helpline. For the deaf or speech impaired, all Elder Helplines can be accessed through the Florida Relay by dialing 711 from anywhere in Florida.

The Elder Helpline also offers a live translation service. Telephone interpreters provide on-the-line assistance by translating from English into as many as 148 different languages.

1-800-96-ELDER
(1-800-963-5337)

ABUSE HOTLINE

Are you worried that an elder relative or friend may be the victim of abuse? You can report known or suspected cases of abuse by calling Florida's Abuse Hotline.

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

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)

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 AAAs also operate a statewide network of 11 local **Elder Helplines**. Individuals and community agencies seeking accurate,

unbiased information about federal, state, or local social and 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 appropriate Elder Helpline for their county listed below:

NORTHWEST FLORIDA

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Serving Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties

Phone: 850-494-7101

Elder Helpline: 866-531-8011

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

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

ELDERSOURCE

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

Phone: 904-391-6600

Elder Helpline: 888-242-4464

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF PASCO-PINELLAS

Serving Pasco and Pinellas Counties

Phone: 727-570-9696

Elder Helpline: 727-217-8111

SENIOR CONNECTION CENTER

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

Phone: 813-740-3888

Elder Helpline: 800-336-2226

SENIOR RESOURCE ALLIANCE

Serving Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties

Phone: 407-514-1800

Elder Helpline: 407-514-0019

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

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

AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER OF BROWARD COUNTY

Serving Broward County

Phone: 954-745-9567

Elder Helpline: 954-745-9779

ALLIANCE FOR AGING

Serving Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties

Phone: 305-670-6500

Elder Helpline: 305-670-4357

ELDER Update

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Elder Update welcomes submissions from readers. However, due to the volume of submissions, acknowledgments cannot be mailed. Articles selected for publication must provide accurate information to Florida's elders about aging-related programs and services and complement the Department's mission. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted material.

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Governor's Message



Ron DeSantis

Governor

Florida continues to put **Seniors First** by ensuring COVID-19 vaccinations focus on the most at-risk populations of those 65 and older. From the beginning, I prioritized seniors 65+ for vaccine distribution. In fact, Florida's approach has been so effective that other states, and the federal government, are now mirroring our efforts. The federal government is now recommending that states prioritize vaccine access to seniors age 65 and older.

We want every Florida senior to have an opportunity to get a vaccine, and by partnering with Publix the state is rapidly increasing access. To see a full list of Publix pharmacies offering vaccinations, visit publix.com/covid-vaccine/florida.

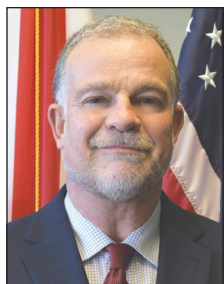
In addition to expanding our partnership with Publix, we are distributing vaccines through pilot programs with places of worship, state-run vaccination sites, senior-living communities, and hospital partnerships. An online vaccine locator is available by visiting the Department of Health website at floridahealthcovid19.gov/vaccines/vaccine-locator. You may pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccination at state-run sites by visiting myvaccine.fl.gov.

Florida is home to 4.5 million seniors age 65 and over, and I'm not going to rest until every senior that wants a shot, gets a shot.

The federal supply of vaccines remains limited, but as new vaccination supplies arrive in our state, we stand ready to deploy those doses to our distribution infrastructure. We have worked collaboratively at all levels to increase vaccine access with innovative programs such as state-supported PODs and drive-thru sites that are performing well and will continue to receive supplies.

I encourage Floridians to opt-in to receive text alerts about the COVID-19 vaccine. Floridians can stay up to date by texting **FLCOVID19 to 888777**.

Secretary's Message



Richard Prudom
Secretary

Governor DeSantis is ensuring Florida's older residents are a top priority in the distribution and availability of COVID-19 vaccines. While many states used federal guidelines that grouped seniors 65 and older into a second phase of vaccine distribution, Governor DeSantis led the way in prioritizing vaccine access to Florida's seniors, and as a result, Florida was the first state to put **Seniors First**: a strategy the federal government is now recommending.

With over 4.5 million people in the 65+ age group in Florida, the vaccinations will take time, but Florida's older population remains a priority. Vaccines are available in all 67 Florida counties, but please keep in mind that appointments are required at most locations and vaccine availability may vary from day to day or week to week as doses are distributed from federal supplies. There is a vaccine locator available at floridahealthcovid19.gov/vaccines/vaccine-locator where you may search by county or city.

The Department of Elder Affairs is working closely with all Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to provide both print and digital resources for added distribution through local providers. The materials include websites and phone numbers of AAA offices and contact numbers for Department of Health county offices. To find your local health department, you may visit the vaccine locator website mentioned above, or go to FloridaHealth.gov, Programs and Services, and then County Health Departments. For updates about the vaccine and distribution, text **FLCOVID19 to 888777**.

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ELDERAFFAIRS.ORG



MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Open Enrollment



Open Enrollment Period Runs from January 1 to March 31, 2021

Anne Chansler,
Florida Department
of Elder Affairs

Are you aware of the Medicare Advantage Special Enrollment Periods? While people with Medicare Advantage (MA) generally must remain in the plan they enrolled in for the remainder of the year, the MA Open Enrollment Period (OEP) and/or a qualifying Special Enrollment Period (SEP) provide potential opportunities to change plans.

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period (MA OEP):

The annual MA OEP runs January 1 - March 31 each year. The MA OEP allows individuals enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan as of January 1 to make a one-time election to another MA plan or return to Original Medicare and a

standalone Medicare Part D plan (PDP). This enrollment period does not allow for Part D changes for individuals enrolled in Original Medicare. Additionally, new Medicare beneficiaries who enroll in an MA plan during the first three months they have Medicare have an individualized three-month MA OEP to switch to another MA plan or return to Original Medicare and a stand-alone Medicare Part D plan. The MA OEP replaces the Medicare Advantage Disenrollment Period, which ran from January 1 to February 14.

Medicare Advantage "Trial Period" Special Enrollment Period (SEP):

People who enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan when they are first eligible at age 65 get a "trial period" (up to 12 months) to try out Medicare Advantage. This SEP allows them to disenroll from their first Medicare Advantage plan to go to Original Medicare (at this time, they also get a "guaranteed issue right" to purchase a Medigap

supplemental plan). This SEP begins when the person first joins the Medicare Advantage plan and lasts up to 12 months. The Original Medicare and the PDP enrollment (if applicable) take effect on the first day of the month following the month in which the SEP was used.

SHINE is a program of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs and is operated locally through the 11 Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Specially trained volunteers help Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to understand their health care options. SHINE volunteers are trained to offer free, unbiased, and confidential information and counseling concerning Medicare and ways to protect yourself from Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse. **To receive help from SHINE call 1-800-96-ELDER (1-800-963-5337) or by visiting floridashine.org.**



Mental Health Recovery & Disasters



*Darcy Abbott, MSW, LCSW
Florida Division of
Emergency Management*

Under the leadership of Florida's First Lady, Casey DeSantis and her Hope for Healing initiative, Florida is prioritizing and understands the great need for mental health services during and after a disaster.

Disasters, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or a hurricane, do not discriminate where they occur or who they target. When disasters strike, local and individual mental health resources can be affected and unable to provide immediate relief to those experiencing distress. Disasters can take a toll on mental health – and it's important to prioritize the mental health recovery process the same way we prioritize the physical recovery process.

During the initial phase of a disaster we can experience fear, shock, panic, suffer from disbelief, or feel disoriented. The type and size of a disaster can affect how long the recovery process may be, and the desire to return to a sense of normalcy can cause feelings of anger, frustration, or depression. These are normal responses to coping with an abnormal event.

Recovery is the most challenging phase of dealing with the reality of a disaster. During recovery, it's important to maintain resiliency. The following tips are simple, but can support mental health during and after a disaster:

Take care of your physical health. Eat nutritious meals when you can, maintain a consistent sleep schedule, and exercise daily.

Practice deep breathing.

Connect with nature. Get outside and be present in the moment.

Reach out and talk to friends and family daily. Talk to people you trust about your feelings.

Do an activity that is fun for you every day.

Prioritize and focus on what is in your control.

Make a gratitude list every day.

Show compassion for yourself and others.

Ultimately, always take advantage of professional support if needed. Sometimes it can feel like we are not making progress in our recovery and feelings can be overwhelming.

If you or others need information on basic resources to assist with the disaster recovery process, call your local 2-1-1 community resource center. 2-1-1 can connect you with someone to talk about transportation, food, housing, healthcare, and crisis counseling.

The National Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990) is also available 24/7 to provide immediate crisis counseling and support those affected by disasters, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Technical Assistance Center is also one of the best websites to find additional resources for disaster survivors and outreach workers. The website is available at [SAMHSA.gov/DTAC](https://www.samhsa.gov/DTAC).

It is encouraging to know that there are so many emotional support resources available virtually and in our communities. All of these resources can assist with the impacts a disaster can have on survivors' mental health.

It's comforting to know that hope will shine a light upon your path as you walk with others on the road to recovery.

Support, Engage, & Impact With iGEN

Jorge Hernandez-Perez,
Student Outreach Member
and Facilitator
Dr. Tamara Gibson-Alonso,
FAMU College of Education

iGEN Committee of Students Voices Organization, a partnership of 13 student-led, adult-supported health and leadership organizations across the state united last spring to foster support, engagement, and positive collective impact. Organizations involved include Boys & Girls Club Florida Alliance, Florida Association of Student Councils, Florida Key Club, Gang Alternatives Program, Health Improvement Project, Healthy Teens Coalition, mindFULL Me, One Love, Sandy Hook Promise, Students Working Against Tobacco, Tampa Teens, Teens Advocating Together, and The Children's Trust of Miami.

The Student Voices Organization of Florida Students United was recently created to ensure determined students throughout the State of Florida have the resources to form and pursue community initiatives. The partnership between community organizations encourages students to embrace three central



tenets: support, engage, and make an impact. After many strategic conversations, student members of the statewide partnership created the *iGEN Committee* in hopes of bridging a growing generational gap and alleviating the impacts of social isolation caused by the pandemic. Further supporting the needs for intergenerational mental wellness, a recent study published in a special issue of the journal *Generations* highlights the importance and connections between health, aging, and longevity.

iGEN's Current Efforts

Having organized two successful outreach events between students and older Floridians this past fall, iGEN's dedicated team of determined young leaders has led several successful months of service-learning experiences. Collectively, the committee coordinated two Virtual Game Hours via Zoom, an online application that allows for

those participating to see each other face to face. During these meetings, participants engaged in virtual games like Jeopardy, Family Feud, and Trivia Crack.

Diana Sanchez, a grandmother of two, detailed her experiences in the iGEN Virtual Game Hour as how "exhilarating it was to share such an entertaining afternoon with a younger generation." Ms. Sanchez continues: "It felt like such a natural bond, where we shared stories, played games, and exchanged fond experiences to inspire the youth. The students of iGEN have truly reignited my confidence in the younger generation, all whilst playing Jeopardy and having lots of fun!"

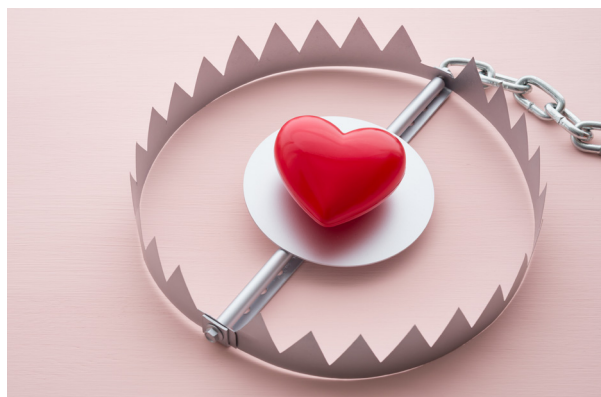
Logan Viera, Chairman of the iGEN committee and a high-school senior, recounts how leading the iGEN Committee is "extremely healing" for him.

Continued on page 11

BEWARE

When Love Is in the Air

Valentine's Day Is Prime Time for Romance Scams



Florida Office of Financial Regulation

Look out for the latest round of romance scams on social media and dating websites and avoid becoming a victim this Valentine's Day. Romance scams can happen to anyone at any time, but they are more common at this time of year. The Florida Office of Financial Regulation encourages Floridians to be cautious when connecting online.

Watch out for these romance scam red flags:

- The scammer says they would like to meet you in person, but they make an excuse that they cannot afford to travel.
- The scammer claims they are living in another country or even that they are responsible for a sick relative.
- The scammer makes a false claim that leads to a request for money.
- If the person has reasons why they cannot meet in person, especially any excuse relating to money, it may be a scam.

How to protect yourself:

- Be wary of online friends who ask for money or for information about your financial situation, especially unsolicited friends.
- Think twice before you post something on social media. Information posted online could be used to scam you.
- Do not give your location or any personal identifying information to anyone online.
- Beware of anyone who "comes on strong," is aggressive, or quickly asks you to move your relationship offline.
- Be extremely cautious of any investment opportunity or business venture pitched through social media or online dating platforms.
- Do your homework on any financial opportunity before committing, and make sure that the business or individual is properly licensed.

It's important to protect yourself online because romance scams happen in real life. In the Orlando area

from 2003 through 2013, Scott Campbell targeted single women with an investment scam through online dating websites. He enticed more than 30 victims into investing in his fake musical recording and talent search business. The Florida Office of Financial Regulation's investigation revealed that Campbell spent most of the \$1 million collected from his victims on gambling and personal living expenses. In 2015, Campbell was sentenced to 20 years in prison and 10 years of probation. If you suspect an online relationship is a scam, stop all contact immediately. If you are the victim of a romance scam, file a complaint with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3).

Remember, we are here to help. If you have a question about a financial business or professional, call or visit us online to verify their license. If you feel that you may be a victim of investment fraud or to report suspicious activity, please file a complaint with the Florida Office of Financial Regulation online, flofr.com, or call (850) 487-9687.



OIG ACHIEVEMENT

Taroub Faraj

*The Office of the Inspector General
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

An accreditation program has long been recognized as a means of maintaining the highest standards of professionalism. Accreditation is the certification by an independent reviewing authority that an entity has met specific requirements and prescribed standards. Schools, universities, and hospitals are some of the most well-known organizations that are required to maintain accreditation. Now, Inspectors General in Florida can attain accredited status through the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc., (CFA). The Commission meets three times per year to oversee the accreditation program and to officially accredit agencies that have passed their review process. The Commission conducts assessments on accredited agencies every three years to ensure requirements and standards continue to be met.

The DOEA Office of Inspector General initially participated in the accreditation process and attained CFA accreditation on June 21, 2017. On October 15, 2020, after a rigorous review process by the CFA, the OIG attained its first reaccreditation. Congratulations to the OIG staff for all their hard work and dedication. Inspector General Taroub Faraj would also like to recognize former DOEA OIG employee, Pamela Damitz, who volunteered her time and assisted the office through the assessment process.

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Six Exceptional EMPLOYERS

Melanie Mowry Etters
Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Blind Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation recognized six businesses with an Exceptional Employer Award last fall. These companies from across the state were recognized for hiring people with disabilities with plaques made by people with disabilities. The 15th annual celebration was held virtually as part of recognizing October as Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The Exceptional Employer Awards are presented to companies that have a strong commitment to employing and retaining people with unique abilities. Event sponsors were The Able Trust and RESPECT of Florida.

The six award-winning businesses were:

- Blaze Pizza Store 1064 of Tallahassee
- Lee County Library System
- Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard of Lake Buena Vista
- The Florida Bar
- Whataburger #55 of Ft. Walton Beach
- Youth Co-Op, Inc. of Miami

APD Director Barbara Palmer said, "We are thrilled to honor these very deserving companies from around the state for their commitment to employing a diverse workforce. These companies know that individuals with special abilities are some of the most reliable employees within their organization. We want



**Pictured Above: Chip Byers and Andrew Collins
with Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard**

employers to know that hiring a person with a disability is good business."

"For those of us at the Florida Division of Blind Services (DBS), National Disability Employment Awareness Month serves as a great opportunity to spotlight wonderful employers who recognize the many benefits of hiring disabled workers and the great work done by those who are blind or visually impaired. While we recognize the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, we strive daily to ensure our clients have the needed access and opportunities to thrive in the workforce," said Division of Blind Services Director Robert Doyle.



KNOW HOW TO GO!

Determining your transportation options in a lifelong community

*Gail M. Holley
Florida Department of
Transportation*

We all want to maintain our independence and connection to our community. Lifelong communities can help citizens of every age remain mobile even if their access or ability to use a personal vehicle changes.

What is a lifelong community? It is a place where you can live with some level of independence in a residence of your choosing with access to things you need on a day-to-day basis. Having safe access to multiple modes of transportation is a key component of a lifelong community. The goal is having access to the places you need or enjoy with or without a car.

The Safe Mobility for Life Coalition provides a step-by-step outline of what a lifelong community should be in our How to Choose Your Lifelong Community Checklist. Use it to define your mobility needs and determine whether your community meets them:

Step 1: Think about what is important for you to have in a community to help you remain independent, mobile, and active.

Step 2: Determine the community you want to review, whether it is your current residence or an area where you may relocate.

Step 3: Decide whether the community you are reviewing offers the features of a lifelong community.

Step 4: Summarize the results and think about what you learned related to your community.

Not every community will have the distinction of being a lifelong community, and that is OK. The first step to

developing a safer, well-rounded transportation plan is knowing what your community does and does not offer. Resources like [FindaRideFlorida.org](https://findarideflorida.org) can assist you in making decisions based on availability.

Creating a plan for errands or activities without a car can provide a new level of freedom, and a potential new way to exercise or socialize. Is the grocery store within walking distance of your residence? Is a nearby park available for a physically distanced get together with neighbors or friends? Are you able to visit the doctor or family by hailing a ride from a transportation network company? Make note of these other options and how they can help you stay connected.

Challenge yourself to use these options to complete your next errand. Make certain when testing out any transportation provider that both you and the operator are following the proper safety guidelines from the CDC.

Need help getting started?

Take control of your transportation future right from your own home with our free resources. Visit fdot.tips/resourcecenter to order or download materials including the Lifelong Community Checklist. You can also email us at Contact@SafeMobilityFL.com or call 1-833-930-2952 for assistance.

Don't Put Off the Flu Vaccine

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Unlike COVID-19, most of us have general knowledge about the flu—a respiratory disease that can lead to serious illness, hospitalization, or death. But like COVID-19, flu shares many of the same symptoms: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle pain or body aches, and headache.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone six months and older get a flu vaccine every year. This year, the CDC underscores that flu vaccine is more important than ever to protect yourself and the people around you, and to help reduce the strain on health care systems responding to COVID-19.

According to the CDC, during the 2016–2017 flu season, vaccination prevented an estimated 5.3 million illnesses, 2.6 million medical visits and 85,000 hospitalizations. Every year, flu vaccine reduces severe illness for people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart or lung disease.

Flu Vaccine and Older Adults

People age 65 and older are at a higher risk for serious flu complications, accounting for 70 to 85 percent of seasonal



flu-related deaths in the United States.

Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years. Each year, the CDC works to ensure the highest safety standards.

Because protection from flu vaccine declines over time and flu viruses are constantly changing, yearly vaccination is best. Flu vaccine is evaluated every year and often updated to address the viruses that will be common during an upcoming flu season.

It's a myth that you can get flu from a flu vaccine. Some people who are vaccinated still catch the flu, but the vaccine serves as protection against severe symptoms and illness.

Keep washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to help stop

the spread of germs—if soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze. Regularly clean and disinfect "high-touch" surfaces in your home, school, or office. And if you're sick, contain those germs and stay home!

LEARN MORE

- General flu information: [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- People at high risk for complications: [cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm)
- Flu vaccine safety: [cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccinesafety.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccinesafety.htm)
- VaccineFinder.org: [dcc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html](https://www.dcc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html)

Farmers Market Shopping

*Dori Landsberg
Nutrition Program Manager
Florida Department of Elder Affairs*

Access to healthy food options is an important aspect in overall physical and mental health. Across the United States, farmers markets have played an important role in supporting local farms and providing communities access to fresh, healthy food during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visiting an outdoor farmers market to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables can be a good option during these uncertain times. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, outdoor farmers markets can provide a lower-risk shopping option with immediate and lasting benefits for shoppers and the community at-large. In addition, many local farmers markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, making them a great place for low-income seniors to find healthy options for food choices.

During the pandemic, farmers in some communities have taken steps to make shopping with them even easier and safer. One such farmer is Kelvin Sherman, whose fresh produce can often be found at farmers markets in Leon County as well as the surrounding area. In an effort to provide fresh products to his local clientele, Mr. Sherman set up a website, called The Fresh Basket Produce, where people can order his produce online and pick it up at convenient locations around the areas he serves. The mission of Fresh Basket Produce is to provide individuals, families, and restaurants with a fresh and affordable food system that is locally



grown and harvested. Mr. Sherman's website is freshbasketproduce.weebly.com.

While shopping for food during COVID-19 has proved challenging for many, the weather and access to a long, fruitful growing season make shopping at local farmers markets for the citizens for Florida a great option. Grab a mask, socially distance, and support local farmers from the community!

Thanks for Your Support

Elder Update staff is deeply gratified by the many generous donations given recently by our readers. Your generosity and kindness are truly appreciated, and your donations will be used to ensure the continued production of *Elder Update*.

Recent Contributors:

- Jeanette Harada
- Roger and Geraldine Douyard
- Ella Cochrane
- Gladys E. Reid

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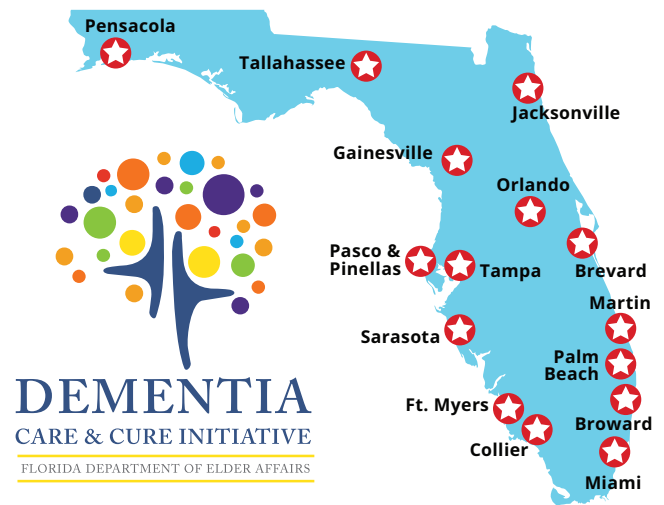
DCCI EXPANDS

Laura Copeland
DCCI Program Coordinator
Florida Department of Elder Affairs

The Dementia Care and Cure Initiative (DCCI) aims to create communities throughout Florida that are sensitive to, and supportive and aware of, the needs of individuals affected by and living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). While this initiative is state-directed, it is community-driven, and the real work of DCCI is carried out by volunteer led and run task forces, which operate in Dementia-Caring Communities throughout the state. DCCI Task Forces are in place to positively impact the lives of those who are affected by ADRD, and they strive to create hospitable spaces and places that are welcoming and able to respond appropriately to the needs of this population.

Throughout the state, DCCI Task Force members work diligently in their respective communities to increase awareness and reduce the stigma of ADRD; provide assistance and link individuals to local, state, and national resources; offer free dementia sensitivity trainings and education; advocate for care and cure programs and research efforts; and much more. While no two DCCI Task Forces are exact replicas of each other, there are many commonalities between all of them in Florida. Each one is supported by DOEA to carry out action plans that they have created, focusing on what is best and most helpful to their communities as it relates to ADRD.

While 2020 proved to be a challenging year across the board for most, DCCI Task Force members throughout Florida stayed resilient and dedicated to the cause. They were able to make



seamless transitions from in-person to virtual programming and activities, while remaining pillars of strength and support for their communities. All DCCI Task Forces continued to meet regularly, and some were able to arrange free virtual dementia sensitivity trainings for a variety of community entities and businesses. Others focused efforts on executing virtual conferences, events, and seminars, and one created resourceful videos on different topics of dementia and dementia care. One DCCI Task Force created a COVID-19 website for caregivers in their community that was replete with helpful resources, while another one sought out and planned virtual engagement opportunities for people living with dementia and their caregivers. Several DCCI Task Forces took time to regroup and plan out their next steps to make 2021 an even better year.

DCCI also celebrated five years in existence in 2020 and welcomed its 15th Dementia-Caring Community and DCCI Task Force in Collier County in December of last year. This year, the DCCI network looks forward to continued growth, and encourages people who are interested to connect and get involved with your local DCCI Task Force. To those who are already participating on a DCCI Task Force, thank you for sharing your time, talents, energy, compassion, and expertise with your communities and for everything you do to collectively make Florida more dementia-caring!

To find a local DCCI Task Force or to learn more about DCCI, email us at DCCI@ElderAffairs.org.



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No single tool is going to stop the pandemic

We have to work together and use all the tools available. Your best defense will be a combination of:

- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine,
- Wearing a mask,
- Staying at least 6 feet away from others, and
- Washing your hands often.



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