

ANNUAL REPORT

St. Joseph County Commission on Aging



2020



Greetings!

2020 was a year we will never forget. It challenged each and every one of us, as well as businesses and organizations such as the Commission on Aging. On March 23, 2020 the Commission on Aging closed its doors due to COVID-19, and there was no indication of when it would be able to open them again.

Immediately, the COA's primary focus was to continue serving our most frail older adults - those receiving food and other help in the home.

A plan was put in place to combine a week's worth of frozen meals, fruits, breakfast items, milk and bread so that the COA could minimize the contact between its Meals on Wheels drivers and the older adults to whom they were delivering.

While I was not the Executive Director in 2020, I am proud to report that those older adults receiving daily meals from the Commission on Aging never went without food. The COA was overwhelmed with generosity by area businesses who contributed to the Meals on Wheels program during this time; again to ensure that our most frail older adults did not go hungry.

Our dedicated group of in-home aides returned to serve their clients in June, while taking the necessary precautions to help keep themselves and the older adults safe.

During this time, I know that another area of concern was the emotional well being of our members. Isolation and loneliness can contribute to a rapid decline in health. Our Life Enrichment team worked with our fitness instructors to begin providing exercise classes on Facebook and YouTube. The next step was to begin offering craft kits to go, which was extremely popular. As the year wore on, and the COA continued to navigate how to provide services with an ever-changing COVID status, the staff searched for new ways to continue to serve our older adults. Working with a local business, the COA was able to rent a tent in our parking lot in Three River and offer as many outdoor programs as we could. In Sturgis, the patio was also heavily utilized with crafts and exercise classes.

I am not surprised at what the COA team accomplished in 2020. They are committed to improving the lives of older adults in St. Joseph County, and refused to let COVID 19 deter them from that mission.

Pamela Riley

Executive Director, January 2021



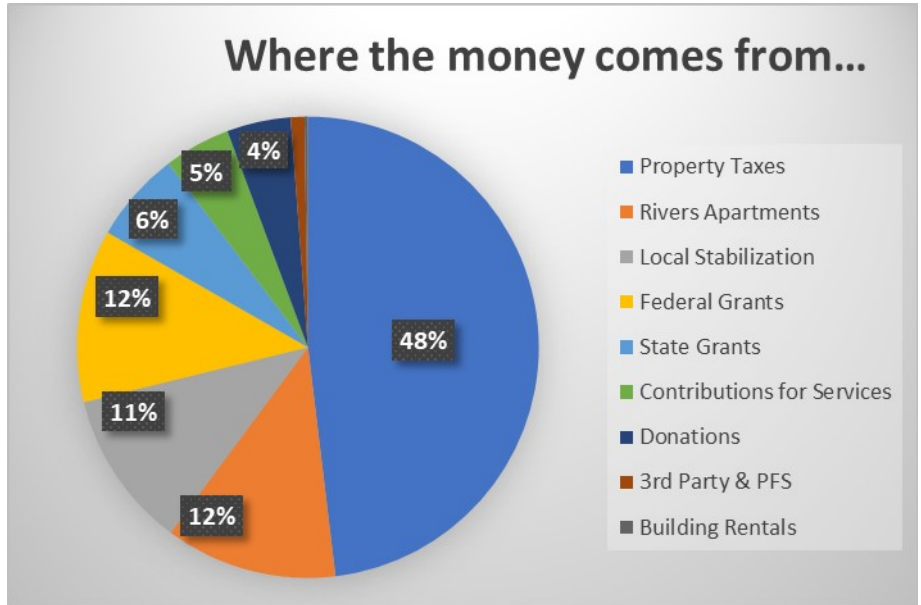
From the Director

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Revenues

Property Taxes	1,538,049
Rivers Apartments	385,303
Local Stabilization	352,462
Federal Grants	387,615
State Grants	204,327
Contributions for Services	148,879
Donations	143,232
3rd Party & PFS	30,624
Building Rentals	7,598

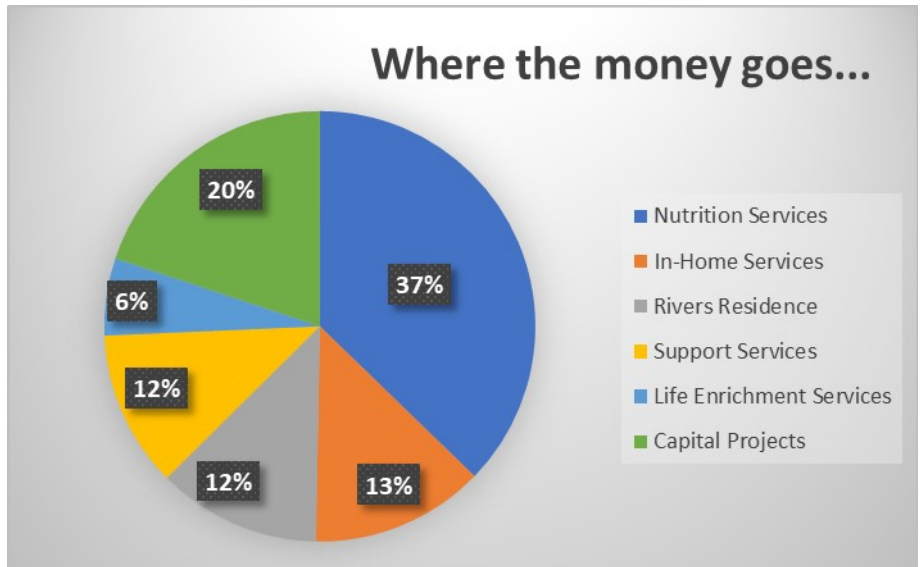
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Expenditures

Nutrition Services	1,035,135
Fund Balance	419,748
In-Home Services	362,149
Rivers Residence	341,101
Support Services	326,451
Life Enrichment Services	160,977
Capital Projects	552,528

3,198,089





In Home Services provided 10,430 hours of service in 2020, serving 230 clients with Homemaking, Personal Care and Respite services. We saw unprecedented times during the COVID-19 pandemic, including having to furlough our in-home aides for a short period until our centers could open back up in June. During the time of shut down, we were able to provide emergency services to our most vulnerable clients who were homebound with no family support. One aide was kept on staff and served 25 individuals on a weekly basis for Personal Care tasks.

The Rivers Residential apartments have been at full capacity since opening in 2019. We turned over five apartments in 2020 due to resident move outs. These apartments were able to be filled right away from an ongoing waiting list. It is clear there is demand for affordable senior housing in the community by the daily inquiries we receive regarding our apartments. The waiting list for a one-bedroom unit

averaged 30 people in the year 2020, with the list for a two-bedroom unit averaging 15 for the year. We have witnessed the seniors' lives enriched not only by being able to take part in the plethora of activities that the COA has to offer right outside their living spaces, but also cultivating new social relationships and interacting among the other residents who call the Rivers their home. The Rivers Residential Apartments are truly a cut above the rest in our community when it comes to senior independent living.

Our apartment residents also received extra support and extra commodities throughout the year. This was extended to some residents who typically would not qualify for these types of programs, on an emergency basis to help support them during that difficult time.

In-Home Services continues to be vital to older adults in St. Joseph County. The COA would like to continue to expand those services, and see growth in the clients that we reach in the coming year.

Nicole Notestine

Residential Services Manager



As the Nutrition Department developed plans for how to keep older adults that were most in need fed during the pandemic, one thing became clear. The depth of support in St. Joseph County for older adults is inspirational.

Once our centers were closed in March, our goal was to ensure there was no stoppage in delivering food to our Home Delivered Meals clients. We began sending out meals once a week to limit exposure, and also included breakfast items. During the “shelter in place” our drivers were delivering more than 5,000 meals per week. In July, our COA nutrition staff produced a second meal for Congregate take-out meals as well as a Meals on Wheels supper sack.



Throughout the year we received generous donations from area businesses and other organizations for our Meals on Wheels program. This included Midwest Energy, John Carmichael of GT Independence and Jim Stuck of Fibre Converters. In addition to the monetary donations to help support our efforts, UAW Local 2093 donated Thanksgiving meals for veterans on our Meals on Wheels routes. The UAW also provided holiday cards and bags filled with household items and toiletries for all HDM clients.

One local restaurant, L.A. Café in Three Rivers, began a “buy a meal, give a meal” campaign which resulted in the café donating 20 meals per week to our HDM clients.

Throughout the year we worked with our Life Enrichment department to provide connections outside of our centers so that our members knew we were thinking of them. This included a “dogs and donuts” event in our parking lots where members were treated to hot dogs and donuts while we encouraged them to renew their COA membership. More than 250 older adults participated. We delivered ice cream treats to all Meals on Wheels participants and finally, we did a 12 Days of Christmas celebration where a gift was given for 12 days culminating in a fleece blanket and a hot breakfast to-go.

Our Friendly Reassurance program provided 1,791 units to older adults in our community most at risk for isolation. Those units included phone calls provided by a local church, treats and cards.

The Nutrition Department worked with the state of Michigan to support its efforts to ensure all older adults received food, not just those receiving Meals on Wheels. This included coordinating several food distribution events through the summer and fall at both centers - providing older adults with shelf stable food, produce or dairy products. We delivered 1,454 of the same food boxes to Meals on Wheels participants.

In 2020, the Nutrition Department provided 148,000 meals to our Home Delivered Meals clients and 31,000 congregate meals, of which approximately 85% were “to-go”.

Katie Hughes

Nutrition Manager

Nutrition



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Life Enrichment took on a new shape in 2020 where we focused on ways to engage our members while not being able to see them face to face. One of the most popular life enrichment activities that we offer is our exercise classes. Our centers closed in March and a few months later we began offering several of those classes on Zoom, Facebook Live or YouTube. Not only was it a challenge to offer the classes virtually, but it was a big learning curve for many of our members who wanted to remain active and connected to the COA.

As the weather turned warmer, we planned as many activities as possible outside, including arts and crafts, Bingo and exercise classes. We were able to secure a tent from a local business at a discounted rate for our Three Rivers Center and in Sturgis, the patio was a lifesaver.

From August through December, the COA Life Enrichment team provided 428 to-go crafts. The members would stop by one of our centers and pick up a prepared kit of craft supplies. We provided both written instructions and a video on Facebook demonstrating how to make the project.

During 2020 there were a few months when we were able to offer some in-person craft projects at the centers. Close to 100 members participated in those.

Our support groups also faced new challenges in 2020 with not being able to meet in person. Our group leaders reached out to participants with phone calls and virtual meetings. In 2020, our Kinship Care Support Group facilitator provided 246 hours of contact time with group participants through phone calls while the meetings were on hold.

With not being able to offer our annual holiday party in 2020 we celebrated throughout the month of December with gifts, coupons for free coffee or hot chocolate at local establishments, a hot breakfast to-go

and much more, including giving away 500 fleece blankets to our members. It could never take the place of our holiday party, but it was our way of letting the older adults in our community know that we were thinking of them.

Ruth Mancina

Life Enrichment & Marketing Manager





Sarah Apwisch



Al Balog



Lee Austermann



Steve Boland



Debbie Davis



John Gelvin



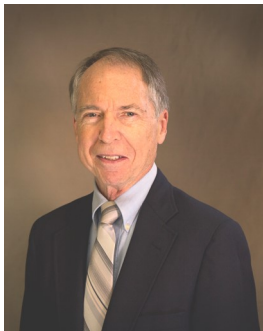
George Letts



Jim MacTavish



Ed Stemen



Chuck Thompson



Jon Withers

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Custodian
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COA Advisory Board 2020



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