

# NEI Aging Today

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## National Family Caregiver Month

Every day, millions of older Americans (those 65 years of age or older) manage basic health and functioning needs with the help of family caregivers. These family caregivers (defined as relatives, partners, friends, or neighbors who provide help because of a personal relationship rather than financial compensation) set up medical appointments, coordinate services, help with daily tasks and nutrition, assist with transportation, manage medicines, and handle bills and banking.

Approximately 43.5 million caregivers provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last 12 months. (National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP). Whether the person they are caring for is living with them or living hundreds of miles away, individuals caring for an older adult sacrifice a lot of

their own time and even their wellbeing. Many caregivers are not only caring for their older adult family member or loved one, they are also balancing working outside of the home and caring for their own children as well.

Without a doubt, the services that family caregivers provide is invaluable. During the month of November we celebrate National Family Caregivers Month to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country. It is a time to raise awareness of family caregiver issues and recognize the sacrifices they make for their loved ones. It is also an opportunity to educate family caregivers about self-care and increase awareness about services and supports available to assist in their journey. For more information call NEI3A at 800-779-8707.



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# Message from the CEO - Donna Harvey

## End of one chapter, beginning of another!



For many years, I have been scripting an article for an area agency on aging newsletter and it is hard to fathom this will be the last!

It began in 1983 when I oversaw two adult day care centers at an agency funded primarily by Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging. That was my first engagement with the Older Americans Act and the local AAA. In 1985, I became the director of the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (INRTC) housed within the Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) along with Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging (HVAAA) and other entities. INRTC and HVAAA were co-located and I was invited to all the internal HVAAA meetings so began to understand the bigger role and responsibilities of an AAA. Chris Harshbarger, the HVAAA director at that time, decided to end his 12+ years as the director and to open his own business. He encouraged

me to apply for the position and in May, 1987, I became the director of HVAAA serving 10 counties. I promised the board at that time that I would commit 3 to 5 years.

In 2010, the newly re-elected Terry Branstad reached out and asked me to take the director of the Iowa Department on Aging position. I truly struggled making that decision as working as the AAA director was/is the greatest job I could have hoped for in my lifetime. But, alas, I accepted the invitation and filled that role for nearly 6 years leading the AAAs through the largest transformation of “reducing the number of AAAs in Iowa” as mandated by legislative action. In October, 2016, then director Mike Isaacson was leaving to take another position, so I decided to apply for the CEO of NEI3A, the newly formed and consolidated entity of 3 previous AAAs. So the 3 to 5 years I promised in 1987 is now almost 34 years!

When I began this journey in 1987, AAAs were offered

the opportunity to apply to the state to become a “stand alone” organization and to seek nonprofit status. We were finding that funding opportunities were not available to us without the nonprofit status so we began that process and in 1989 became a nonprofit organization with a new governing board of directors. Under INRCOG, the governing board was comprised of elected officials from towns and counties located within Region 7 that represented 6 of the 10 counties we served, leaving 4 of the counties having little voice in administrative actions. This newly comprised Board had representatives from all 10 counties and we began to see our services expand and the



*New Waterloo Office location open house 2019: Pictured left to right - Dave Williams, House Representative District 60; Donna Harvey; Eric Giddens, Senator District 30; and Linda Miller, Director Iowa Department on Aging*

communities we serve expand. That tradition continues today at NEI3A with 18 counties having representation on the Board and/or Area Advisory.

I have had so many opportunities to work with excellent volunteers, outstanding staff, strong advocates including elected officials, and my fellow AAAs throughout the state and country. This network of committed individuals is phenomenal. No matter the challenge, a plea can be made to fellow AAAs for ideas, experience, or sometimes just an email or call of support. I am not sure you could find that replicated in any other network. I have been so fortunate to serve on many na-

tional and statewide boards advocating for older persons, being able to testify in front of legislative committees and Congressional Committees and to have so many that have stood with me, including so many great volunteers and other advocates of older persons.

So now what? My husband retired nearly two years ago and we plan to do some traveling. We have many places in the United States we want to see and explore. We purchased a motor home



*Donna Harvey receiving Excellence in Leadership Award at the n4a Conference (2010). Pictured left to right: Sandy Markwood, CEO of N4A; Donna Harvey; and Lynn Kellogg, CEO at Minnesota Region IV Area Agency on Aging*

in preparation for this day and plan to be where there is no ice or snow to remove for the winter but not sure how long we can be apart from our family so we may return to Iowa periodically to re-charge. We have many family and friends throughout the United States that we plan to visit. And, we have a great place in Denver, Iowa with raised garden beds and flower beds that will keep us busy in the warmer weather.

Thank you to everyone for this great opportunity to be part of the area agency on aging network serving northeast Iowa and Iowa as a whole. It has been an amazing journey and I know the Board will be bringing on the next leader to take the agency to greater heights and successes!

-Donna Harvey

### **Message from the Board:**

*As president of the board of directors for Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging, I would like to thank Donna Harvey for her dedication and commitment to the aging network. Over the past 34 years, her innovative ideas, strategic thinking, and tireless devotion have enabled older individuals to remain independent as they age.*

*Donna's influence reaches much farther than Northeast Iowa. Through close collaboration with many colleagues across the United States, Donna has impacted advocacy and influenced positive changes for older individuals.*

*Thank you, Donna, for inspiring your staff, volunteers, board members, and colleagues to follow the mission to empower older individuals to age with dignity and respect.*

*Jean Maddux, NEI3A Board President*

### **NEI3A Board Members:**

*Dan Anderson, Kathy Babcock, Jacob Bates, Dan Byrnes, Diana Dawley, Joyce Denczek, Elaine Eshbaugh, LuAnn Goeke, Shirley Helmrichs, Jessica Ledtje, Jean Maddux, Marna Mitchell-Butler, Patrick Murray, Greg Orwoll, Connie Perry, Vicki Rowland, Dean Thompson, and Clark Wilharm*

# The Caregiving New-New Normal

By Gary Barg

How many times have we caregivers heard the phrase “The New Normal?” A perfect metaphor for the life we start leading once our loved one takes ill. Suddenly, the trips to Bermuda or the casino or the bingo parlor, have been replaced by trips to the myriad doctor’s offices and emergency waiting rooms. The golf or book club groups were replaced by (hopefully) support group meetings and your nightly sleep regime had been reduced from eight to (if lucky) three. The travel website visits have been replaced by visits to supportive sites such as caregiver.com.

Over these past 25 years, so many caregivers we have spoken with have fearlessly-

ly embraced the new normal and have made it an integral part of their life. All new medications are researched and health teams questioned until clear and concise answers are elicited, even from the doctors.

We have found ways to carve out some well-deserved personal space for ourselves in the new normal and have even capitalized upon the humor it sometimes presents. We have attended local caregiver conferences, support groups and luncheons to spend time with our fellow caregivers.

So now, as caregiver during Covid-19, we have actually entered what I like to call The New-New Normal for family caregivers.

I recoil when I see any television program produced B.C. (Before Covid-19) where people would shake hands or jam city streets. The last doctor’s office waiting room I encountered was in early march and already a few of us were wearing masks. In late-march, I was one of only a few folks in my local grocery store wearing a mask and now you cannot enter without one. So, how do we create a life as caregivers in this New-New Normal? Just like we did when we entered the original Caregiving New Normal phase of our lives. By fearlessly adapting, partnering and paying attention.

- Remember to take care of you, too: If your doctor’s office offers telehealth services, make an appointment for yourself as well as for your loved ones
- Stay informed but not fearful: Find the correct information you need from your doctor or medical center website or from the CDC website
- Stay connected: Zoom chats, Facebook live, Skype we live in a world where video connection is possible through every smartphone. Contact your favorite people and talk about anything but caregiving
- If your loved one lives in a Long-Term Care Facility:



*Continued on next page*

Make sure you understand the policies and procedures in place to keep them safe. Make a plan to stay in touch with them through regular video calls.

- Follow the rules: regarding safe-distancing, sheltering-in place, masks and sanitizing, especially as so many of our cities are starting to reopen for business.

Above all, remember that you are not alone. Your local area Agency on Aging, Alzheimer's Association and many other health-care groups staff members are still available event if they are working from home.

The New-New Normal, bring it on!

*Gary Barg is Founder and Editor-In-Chief of Today's Caregiver and caregiver.com. Gary created The Fearless Caregiver Conferences which bring together caregivers to share their knowledge, experience and wisdom. He has written three books to date, The Fearless Caregiver, Caregiving Ties that Bind and his newest book, You Are Not Alone which is filled with the advice and wisdom learned from family caregivers at over 280 Fearless Caregiver conferences held since 1998. He can be reached at gary@caregiver.com*



## Join us for our Facebook Live events!

*Join us for valuable information, fun facts, exercises to keep you moving, and nutrition tips to keep you healthy. Like and follow us on Facebook and watch for our weekly Facebook Live events.*

## Caregiver Support Group Conference Calls

*We want to help keep you safe at home, but also offer you the support you need as a caregiver!  
Join us for weekly conference calls:*

**Decorah - Mondays 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Dubuque - Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 p.m.**

**Waterloo - Wednesdays 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Marshalltown - Thursdays 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.**

*Are you a grandparent or family member raising a grandchild? Connect with others to share experiences and learn about available resources.*

**Grandparents Support Group - Mondays: 1:00-2:00 p.m.**

**To join any of these support groups call 1-800-264-8432 and use participant code 961847#**

**If you have questions call 1-800-779-8707**





## Your Support Matters

COVID changed the way many of us go about our day. For aging Iowans who already have limited contact with individuals or access to food and services, this caused an increased strain.

We immediately expanded our meal delivery options, partnering with local grocers, restaurants, and meal delivery vendors to reach people in rural areas where we have not been able to serve before. This tripled the number of meals served the previous year to over 237,000 meals, helping them limit their exposure to the virus.

Your generous support can help us continue these valuable services, giving homebound individuals the nutrition they need to remain in their homes and stay healthy.

Now through October 16 we are proud to be participating in the Community Thrives Challenge. Your donation at this time can have additional impact through matching gifts and additional awards given for agencies with most donations. Find our fundraising page link at [www.nei3a.org](http://www.nei3a.org).

To - The Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging  
— I would like to express my sincere gratitude to your organization for providing meals-on-wheels during the present Covid-19 crisis.  
— As a senior-citizen, I am remaining homebound during this time and, my cupboard was looking bare!  
— The delivered <sup>meals</sup> are like 'mana-from-heaven'.  
— Please share my gratitude with the members of your organization at this time of great need!

# Medicare Open Enrollment Periods

## When to join a Medicare Advantage Plan or Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

It's important for you to know when to sign up for Medicare or when to join a Medicare plan. Remember these times so you get the most out of your Medicare and avoid late enrollment penalties:

- **Initial Medicare Enrollment Period:** Most people get Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Part B (Medical Insurance) during this period. It starts 3 months before you turn 65 and ends 3 months after you turn 65. If you're not already collecting Social Security benefits before your Initial Enrollment Period starts, you'll need to sign up for Medicare online or contact Social Security.

To get the most from your Medicare and avoid the Part B

late enrollment penalty, complete your Medicare enrollment application during your Initial Enrollment Period. This lifetime penalty gets added to your monthly Part B premium, and it goes up the longer you wait to sign up. Find out if you should get Part B based on your situation.

- **General Medicare Enrollment Period:** If you miss your Initial Enrollment Period, you can sign up during Medicare's General Enrollment Period (January 1–March 31), and your coverage will start July 1.

- **Special Enrollment Period:** Once your Initial Enrollment Period ends, you may have the chance to sign up for Medicare during a Special Enrollment Period (SEP). You can sign up for Part A and or Part B during

an SEP if you have special circumstances.

## When to join a Medicare Advantage Plan or Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

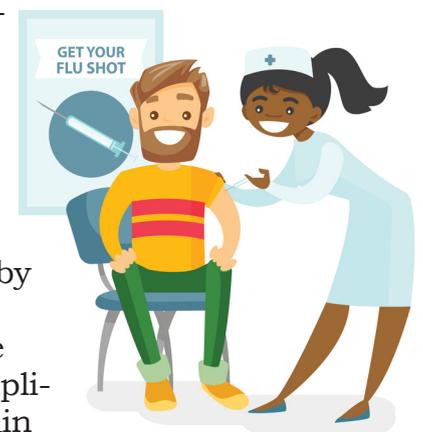
The best time to join a Medicare health or drug plan is when you first get Medicare. Signing up when you're first eligible can help you avoid paying a lifetime Part D late enrollment penalty. If you miss your first chance, generally you have to wait until fall for Medicare's annual Open Enrollment Period (October 15–December 7) to join a plan. During this time each year, you can also drop or switch your plan coverage.

It's important to understand when you can enroll in Medicare and be confident in your choices. To learn more visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

# Take Time to Get A Flu Vaccination

**Getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever during 2020-2021 to protect yourself and the people around you from flu, and to help reduce the strain on healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
- Flu vaccines will not prevent COVID-19, but they will reduce the burden of flu illnesses and hospitalizations on the health care system and conserve medical resources.
- CDC estimates that last season, fewer than half of Americans got a flu vaccine and at least 410,000 people were hospitalized from flu.
- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get annual flu vaccine by the end of October.
- Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic health conditions, and people 65 years and older.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for people at higher risk to keep from spreading the flu to them.



# Financial Exploitation During Pandemic

The Iowa Insurance Division recently reminded Iowans that heightened isolation and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic have created a perfect storm for senior financial exploitation.

“Social isolation is a leading factor contributing to the financial exploitation of older investors and quarantines to protect against the spread of the novel coronavirus have taken social isolation to a new dimension for many seniors, making them more vulnerable to financial exploitation,” Iowa Insurance Commissioner Doug Ommen said. While financial abuse can happen at any time, perpetrators often strike during times in a senior’s life when they may be more vulnerable.

## What to Watch For:

Senior financial exploitation can be difficult to identify or recognize. Below are five examples of warning signs to watch for among the seniors in your lives:

- A new and overly protective friend or caregiver or surrendering control of finances to a new friend or partner.
- Fear or sudden change in feelings about somebody.
- A lack of knowledge about financial status or reluctance to discuss financial matters.
- Sudden or unexplained changes in spending habits, a will, trust, or beneficiary designations.
- Unexplained checks made out to cash, unexplained loans, or unexplained disappearance of assets (cash, valuables, securities, etc.).

Also watch for suspicious signatures on the senior’s checks or other documents.

## How You Can Help:

- **Contact.** Keep in touch with older family members, friends, and neighbors. Call or leave a note on their front door. If they have the technology, send them a text, email, Facetime or Skype. Contact is key to letting your loved ones know you are thinking of them.
- **Inform.** Let your older family members know that fraudsters and scammers have found ways to exploit the pandemic.
- **Act.** Iowans with suspicions of possible senior financial exploitation to contact the agency at [iid.iowa.gov](http://iid.iowa.gov) or 877-955-1212.

## RSVP

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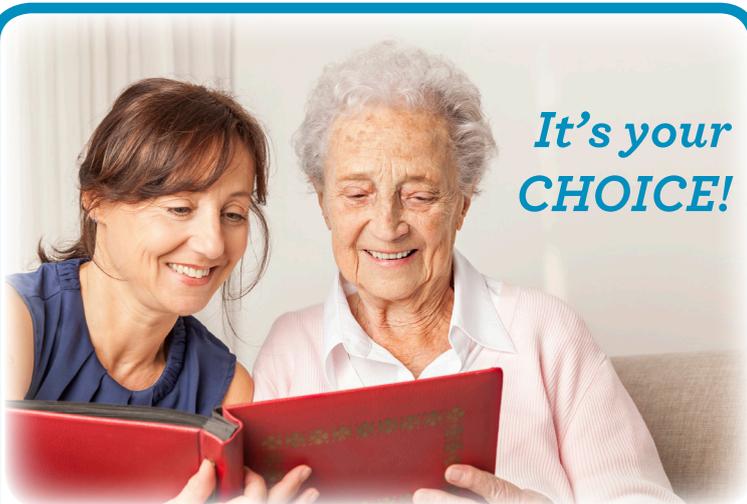


**Sally Timmer - RSVP Coordinator**

Phone: 319-272-2087

Email: [sally\\_timmer@vccv.org](mailto:sally_timmer@vccv.org)

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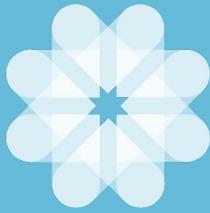
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[careinitiatives.org](http://careinitiatives.org)



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In accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Aging Discrimination Act of 1975, it is the policy of Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging to provide services to all persons eligible under the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, handicap, or age.



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