



Report to the Commissioners
Area IX Agency on Aging, Flathead County
May 20, 2013
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Story: Care Farm Pilot – a glimpse of the future for seniors and people with disabilities in the Flathead

The Care Farm Pilot is the brainchild of Dutch native Maarten Fischer of A Plus HealthCare. Maarten moved here last year with his wife, who is from the Valley, and their three children. He has a master's degree from the University of Amsterdam and many years of experience creating and managing multifunctional agricultural projects designed to promote preservation and expansion of agricultural businesses by integrating them with broader community life. He is also an articulate, energetic, and passionate advocate for seniors and people with disabilities. His focus with A Plus is on helping people engage in meaningful and enjoyable activities and in doing so to better their physical and emotional health. To that end he has brought the very successful Dutch model of the Care Farm to the Flathead.

Care Farms are collaborations between local farmers and social service agencies that provide opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities to contribute to the work of the farm in whatever way they can in the areas that interest them, supported by the farmers who are paid for their efforts. Farm programs also provide much needed respite for caregivers who need a break and want to know their loved one is enjoying themselves at the same time. Activities include typical farm tasks such as gathering eggs, feeding animals, and taking care of baby chicks as well as preparing lunch and socializing and having fun together after the "work" is done. Care Farms staff have been trained to comply with all relevant health and safety rules and regulations.

In partnership with Maarten and A Plus, AOA is sponsoring five senior participants (out of 15 applicants) for three months of specialized respite once a week through the Care Farm Pilot at Purple Frog and Lighthouse. All of the individuals selected to participate are mostly homebound, and their social and physical inactivity put them at high risk for institutionalization. The initial response has been overwhelmingly positive:

- Charlie's wife said this was the first time in months that he said he had had a good day.
- Lily and Jack had more exercise in one day at the farm than they usually have in a week. Lily couldn't believe there are places like this and can't wait to go again.
- Arnold said he was "treated like a king."
- Rose said she loved helping in the kitchen to prepare a meal; cooking had been her life's work but it had been such a long time since she got to work with others like that. The staff invited her to bring one of her own recipes next time and to teach them how to prepare it for the shared meal. She was thrilled.
- One of the participant's family members said, "I really needed the respite and this program doesn't just do that, but brings home my loved one happy and fulfilled." It is easier for her to care for him the rest of the week because his mood is so much improved.
- A case manager for a young woman with autism who got to see the process firsthand couldn't believe how engaged and involved the young woman was and said, "Complete success already in my book!"

Maarten is monitoring the participants' progress over the course of the Pilot against criteria that measure happiness, empowerment and overall physical health. At the end of the Pilot, we will evaluate its success and, assuming the outcome we anticipate, look for ways to incorporate elements into existing programs and for additional resources to expand the entire Care Farm model.

AOA Administration

Budget

- FY 2013: We received revised budget amounts from DPHHS that reflect sequestration cuts totaling \$16,355. More than half of these cuts are in nutrition where we have a substantial fund balance. We do not anticipate any cuts in service at this time. The County Commissioners approved a budget amendment with these adjustments for FY 2013 on 4/30/13. An additional amendment is anticipated in June to address some minor issues as we do our final reconciliation of our FY 2013 budget with the state DPHHS contract.
- FY 2014: We also received an estimate from DPHHS for FY 2014 which also includes federal funding cuts. However, because the state approved a new budget that includes additional state funding for aging services plus a provider rate increase, and because the allocations are based on population increases as recorded in the 2010 census, Flathead County will receive an additional \$27,725 over the original FY 2013 budget (prior to the sequestration cuts). County Commissioners reviewed the draft FY 2014 budget on 5/9/13.
- Lisa and Office Administrator Kathi Kallis met with DPHHS staff on 4/23/13 to review needed amendments to the FY 2013 DPHHS contract. The draft of the amended contract will be sent to the state office this afternoon. The draft of the FY 2014 DPHS contract is due in June.

Legislative Issues

- The new state budget signed by the Governor includes aging services in the base budget (as opposed to One-Time-Only funding), additional appropriations of \$500,000 per year over the biennium and a provider rate increase.

M4A

- Lisa and Office Administrator Kathi Kallis attended the quarterly M4A meeting in Helena (4/24-25)
 - AAA Directors met with Richard Opper, the new DPHHS Director, who expressed his support for aging services and his intention to work closely with AAAs to ensure aging issues are a focus of the Department and the Bullock administration.
- We've been approved to host the 2014 Governor's Conference on Aging. The conference provides two days of education on aging issues, offers the opportunity for stakeholders to network and share innovative ideas and supports the local economy.

Building

- CDBG: On 4/24/13 County Commissioners voted not to move forward with a CDBG grant application for a new AOA facility at this time. Many support letters were received prior to the vote. We will incorporate them into the strategic planning process.
- Kelly Road: **Thank you again to the Commissioners** for approving modification to the building to address safety concerns. The changes are almost complete. **Thanks to IT and Maintenance** as well for working closely with AOA staff to make moving offices a smooth and relatively painless process!

Advisory Council

- The AOA Advisory Council and Finance Committee meetings were held on 5/9/2013. Members shared information about the organizations they represent. Topics of discussion included the impact of the recent legislative session on the AOA budgets for FY 2013 and FY 2014, the opportunity for AOA to host the 2014 Governor's conference, next steps in the strategic planning process and preparation for developing the upcoming 4-year Area Plan, a summary of the quarterly Senior Center President's meeting held on 5/6/13 and Wellness and By-Law Committee updates.

Strategic Planning

- Focus groups have been completed. A volunteer from the AOA Advisory Council is in the process of transcribing the recordings of them. Once they are completed, we will conduct an analysis of themes to bring back to AOA staff and Council members for discussion and incorporation into the strategic plan (which will form the basis for the next Area Plan).
- The other AAA directors requested (and were provided) a copy of the focus group questions and format as option for gathering public input for their own Area Plans.

Research and Program Evaluation

- We have volunteered to participate in a study by the U.S. Administration on Community Living on the effectiveness of different approaches to service provision to inform better delivery of long-term services and supports (LTSS).
- We've been randomly selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Eighth National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants in coordination with the Montana DPHHS.

Outreach/Education/Media - Increased outreach is a goal in our Area Plan on Aging (Oct. 2011- Sept. 2015)

- On 4/20/13 RSVP staff participated in the annual United Way Share Fair at Center Mall.
- The Daily Interlake published an article on the many services provided by AOA on 4/27/13.
- Lisa made a presentation on AOA services to the Noon Rotary on 5/2/13.
- Susan Kunda, I&R Program Manager and Ombudsman, participated on a panel at the Senior Resource Fair on 5/11/13.
- AOA had a booth at the Preparedness Fair in Bigfork on 5/18/13 to distribute a variety of information about AOA services as well as a brochure entitled "Disaster Preparedness for Seniors."
- Lisa Sheppard gives weekly brief presentations about AOA events and services every Wednesday morning at BNI.
- IT has ordered software for AOA that will allow us to post statistics, reports, menus, I&R info, newsletters and other items on the AOA page on the county website. Once it arrives, IT will train a designated staff person and we'll be up and running!

Eagle Transit

- April 2013 ridership was 7,618 compared with 7,874 in April 2012. FY13 ridership to date is 78,577 up 1.6% from last year's total at this time of 77,340. Annual target is 78,750 or approximately 6,562 rides per month. The average for this fiscal year through April 2013 is 7,858 rides per month. We are on track to total more than 90,000 rides this fiscal year.
- LSC Transportation Consultants continue to work on the new Five Year Transit Development Plan. This month they are focusing on gathering public input. A survey with riders has been completed and stakeholder input meetings have been scheduled with seniors and Eagle Transit staff.
- The Eagle Transit Advisory Board met on 5/2/13. Glacier National Park presented on the status of park operations and the bus contract with Eagle Transit. Funding for service this season will be reduced from \$750,000 to \$725,000. Carol Pike with the Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce expressed concern about the negative impact on local businesses from delayed or decreased park hours or cuts in park services. Discussion focused on creative ways to reconfigure services to address concerns. Transportation Manager Dave Polansky also updated members on the status of the Five Year Transit Development Plan.
- Eagle Transit began providing "Premium Medical Return Service" using an accessible passenger van on 5/13/13. The driver is PASS (Passenger Safety and Securement Training) certified and has previously been trained as a CNA. He recently was called upon to handle an emergency in which a passenger had a grand mal seizure.
- Also on 5/13/13 Dave presented the Eagle Transit United Way request to the Citizens' Review panel.
- On 5/17/13 at Dave's request Pat McCarthy from PayneWest Insurance evaluated the Eagle Transit administrative office building for carbon monoxide emissions. He recommended some changes to reduce

the possibility of carbon monoxide being pulled into the building due to the proximity of the bus barn. Eagle Transit staff are implementing these changes effective immediately. Pat also recommended an inspection of the heating system, which Dave is coordinating with Maintenance.

- On 5/18/13, First Aid and CPR training was provided to drivers.

Nutrition

- Total meals served in April March were 6,753. Congregate meals totaled 3,493 and home delivered meals totaled 3,260. There were 8 new home-delivered customers for a yearly total of 300 and 53 new congregate customers for a yearly total of 959. Total meals served this fiscal year as of 4/30/13 were 63,410. Average meals served per month to date is 6,341, which is slightly under the FY 2012 average of 6,370 meals per month. Our target for FY 2013 is 77,250 (monthly average 6,437).
- The new “Bring a Friend” initiative continues in partnership with Senior Centers to support efforts to increase the number of congregate customers.
- Plans are in full swing for the annual Older Americans Day Picnic scheduled for Friday June 21, 2013 at the Fairgrounds. RSVP members and 4H participants will volunteers for a variety of tasks, including set up, dessert preparation, decorating, sign-in tables, serving and clean up. We’d love to have Commissioners join us in serving seniors that day.

I & R/Assistance

- April 2013 Independent Living statistics include:
 - 259 hours of homemaker services (2,839 through 4/30/13, an average of 284 per month); our annual target is 3,675 or an average of 306 hours per month
 - 4 new clients in April; total number through 4/30/13: 149
 - 159 hours of escort/errand services (1,558 through 4/30/13, an average of 156 per month); there is no workload indicator for this service in the FY 2013 budget
 - 4 new clients in April; total number of escort/errand clients through 4/30/13: 60
 - 176 hours of respite (2306 through 4/30/13, an average of 230 per month); our annual target is 3,500, which averages 292 hours per month.
 - 2 new clients in April; total number of respite clients through 4/30/13: 67
 - Additional respite hours were provided through the Care Farm Pilot
- From March:
 - 4 new legal clients
 - 1,105 calls/walk-in assistance; our annual target is 11,220 units of service, an average of 935 per month
 - 40 telephone reassurance calls
 - 8 Ombudsman visits (Regional Ombudsman made remainder of visits while Ombudsman on vacation)
 - 102 SHIP hours
 - 62 home visits to at risk clients
- We continue to place people from the IL waiting lists for onto services.
- AOA Program Manager Susan Kunda is also the only Ombudsman for all of Flathead County. She visits all 19 nursing homes and assisted living facilities each month, investigates complaints and works to resolve those that require intervention. Last fiscal year Susan handled 44 cases. (In contrast, Missoula has 8 Ombudsmen for a comparable number of facility residents – Missoula 1,359 and Flathead 1,227.) Fortunately the state has targeted additional funding to AOA for Ombudsman services. We should know shortly how much money is available. Susan is also in the process of training a new volunteer Ombudsman, called a Friendly Visitor, who will work 20 hours a week.
- I&R staff attended the annual Montana Gerontology Society Conference on 4/24/13.

RSVP

- The RSVP Advisory Board met on 4/25/13.
- Based on participant feedback, the annual Volunteer Recognition banquet has been postponed until September.
- Requested revisions to the CNCS grant were submitted.
- On 5/17/13, RSVP Director Sue Holst, along with RSVP volunteers and Lisa Sheppard presented the RSVP United Way request for FY 2014 to the Citizens' Review panel, highlighting the many ways in which RSVP volunteers contribute to the Flathead community.
- Sue attended the Annual State Director's Meeting on 5/15/13.

Senior Mobile Home Repair

- The Advisory meeting was held 5/14/13.
- Two projects have been completed; six are in progress.
- A new promotional video has been completed and will be available to use shortly.

Senior Centers - A primary AOA focus is outreach to area Senior Centers to build relationships, extend support, and explore new opportunities for partnership.

- On 5/6/13, Center Presidents met in Columbia Falls for their quarterly meeting. Lisa Sheppard and Nutrition Program manager J.R Isles also attended. Topics discussed included outreach for nutrition and other services, the AOA FY 2014 budget and center contracts, fundraising, and cross-center promotion of activities and events.
 - The Centers decided not to pursue a joint fundraising event at this time.
 - The next meeting is scheduled for 8/19/13.
- Lisa attended the 5/3/13 potluck in Columbia Falls.