

# VIRGINIA

Department for Aging and  
Rehabilitative Services

## Commissioner

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## Website:

[www.vadars.org](http://www.vadars.org)

## Number of AAAs:

25

## No Wrong Door Partners:

228



The Local Office on Aging in Roanoke, VA has partnered with "Takeout Hunger"

# COVID-19: More Creative and Promising Practices From the Aging Services Network May 2020

Throughout the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, Virginia's 25 area agencies on aging (AAAs) are supporting, assisting, and engaging with the Commonwealth's older adults as they *stay at home*. This promising practices series was developed by [DARS Division for Community Living](#) through interviews, conversations, and two statewide surveys reflecting a 100% response rate from our AAAs. We hope this sharing of ideas and innovation from local communities will inspire new partnerships and creative solutions.



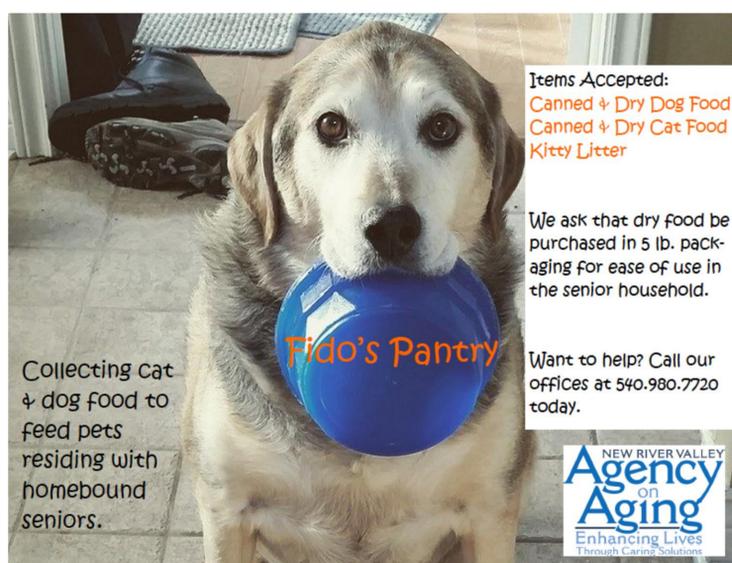
## Assuring Food Access and Food Security

Across the Commonwealth, requests for groceries, meals, and pet food are increasing and our AAAs are innovating, collaborating, and going above and beyond to connect older adults and people with disabilities with nutritious food. For example, [Alexandria Agency on Aging](#) has continued to deliver its traditional, fresh home-delivered meals seven days per week. They have also started a COVID-19 home-delivered frozen meals program, where people receive 14 meals per week, delivered twice weekly.

[Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens \(AASC\)](#) has re-routed the food supply chain to better serve older adults by contracting with a local grocery store. The agency receives food and supplies twice weekly to deliver to older adults. With this partnership, AASC delivers enough food to last three to four weeks. Food boxes include breakfast items, as well as milk, eggs, and bread. Each food box has activity books, educational information, and agency information.

For many older adults who are restricted to their homes, pets offer the closest social contact in their households. Often, these dogs and cats, like their human counterparts, struggle with access to food.

At [Local Office on Aging \(LOA\)](#), community partnerships have made it possible for LOA to get extra food and necessities into the homes of their clients. Through a partnership with "Takeout Hunger," LOA now delivers hot fresh meals from local restaurants to 150 clients weekly. In partnership with Feeding America, LOA has distributed almost 300 COVID-19 emergency food boxes. Additionally, LOA and Generation Solutions, a local home health agency, cooperate to collect food for LOA's food pantry.



Items Accepted:  
Canned + Dry Dog Food  
Canned + Dry Cat Food  
Kitty Litter

We ask that dry food be purchased in 5 lb. packaging for ease of use in the senior household.

Want to help? Call our offices at 540.980.7720 today.

NEW RIVER VALLEY  
Agency  
on  
Aging  
Enhancing Lives  
Through Caring Solutions

Fido's Pantry at New River Valley Area Agency on Aging collects canned and dry cat and dog food and kitty litter.

[New River Valley Agency on Aging \(NRV\)](#) reports that "seniors are making the conscious choice daily to take their home-delivered meal and feed their pet, thereby going hungry to keep the pet alive." Fido's Pantry, a pet meals program offered by the NRV, recognizes that food security is important for family pets, too.

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### Above and Beyond

At [Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia \(SSSEVA\)](#), a resource

specialist received a call from a woman who could not locate distilled water she necessary to operate her CPAP machine.

At high-risk for contracting COVID-19, she was also afraid to go to the store. Initial attempts by SSSEVA were unsuccessful, but the resource specialist would not give up.

He understood how vital distilled water is to a CPAP machine, since he used one himself.

During his lunchtime, he donned his PPE, purchased two gallons of distilled water, and dropped them off at the client's home, following the rules on social distancing.

Receiving the distilled water and financial assistance to purchase more, set the woman's mind at ease.



### Community Connections

Despite the stay at home orders to keep Virginia safe, our AAAs found ways to reach across the social distance with heartwarming and heartfelt expressions of love for older adults. From weekly newsletters to cardmaking kits to volunteers making social distance visits to Mother's Day vases filled with fresh flowers from gardens of community members, [Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services \(Rapp Rap\)](#) coordinated creative social connectedness activities across five counties. Rapp Rap celebrated the spring season by running a monthly long poetry contest, judged by staff at a local Walgreens.

[Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging](#) transformed Mother's Day into a town parade with the Front Royal Police Department and Warren County Sheriff's Office joining in to deliver meals, while staff dressed in 50s-themed costumes. They laughed, they waved, they joked, and a great time was had by all! In May, Fairfax County launched their [Virtual Senior Center for Active Adults](#) through partnerships with many county agencies. One activity that has been a big hit? Their twice weekly "Lunch Bunch", facilitated by ServiceSource, allows participants to eat together virtually. As the pandemic extended into May, AAAs put the kibosh on social isolation in favor of community connection.

Public health crises require new ways of thinking about our resources and capacity to keep doing the work. [Loudoun Area Agency on Aging \(LAAA\)](#) has done just that by training Parks and Recreation Department staff members from the Department's Youth and Sports Divisions. This new cadre of employees typically work in facilities now temporarily closed to the public due to COVID-19. The Parks and Recreation group has delivered approximately 260 home delivered meals per day since March 16! LAAA says, the *bless in the mess* has been positive as many staff members have expressed great satisfaction with, increased awareness of our services, and much gratitude for the opportunity to serve older adults!

When the [Jefferson Area Board for Aging \(JABA\)](#) wanted to create new ways of connecting with older adults, the Volunteer Coordinator called out to their volunteers to share their talents via JABA's Facebook page, so they could alert Community Senior Center and Adult Care Center members and anyone interested to watch and enjoy. This strategy has proved a huge success in connecting staff, volunteers, and the community by spreading joy and keeping everyone engaged. JABA's Facebook page has transformed into a true community space filled with poetry readings, child musicians, budding comedians, and gifted storytellers. As a result, staff, volunteers, and JABA members are growing in their own creativity!



Happy Mother's Day from  
Shenandoah AAA!

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*We know that isolation is something that now extends to the whole community. All members of the community — clients, volunteers and staff — need connection and purpose right now.*

*With recent developments, we have become creative in approaching community support. Volunteer Insurance Counselors now work with clients over the phone, and We have developed a virtual-friendly caller training. Individuals can be interviewed, screened, trained, and volunteer all from home. ”*

— Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA)

### Business Continuity in a Time of Crisis

With the pandemic, every AAA has been challenged to shift services to comply with the stay-at-home order, which has also meant shifting how we do our work and connect with each other. Many of the staff and volunteers who serve the Commonwealth’s older adults have health concerns that place them at higher risk during these difficult times. In addition to following the Centers for Disease Control’s guidelines on cleaning, disinfecting, and social distancing, AAAs are instituting additional safety measures to protect staff and clients. For example, AASC installed plexiglass shields on their transit buses for driver’s safety, an improvement that helped them to retain some of their staff.

Similarly, at [Bay Aging](#), employee health checks are being performed on all Bay Transit employees at the beginning of their shift every day, including checking for COVID-19 symptoms and taking their temperatures. To facilitate social distancing while on the bus, they limit buses to a maximum of three people, have installed plexiglass barriers around the driver’s seat and have seats taped off to keep riders separated from each other and away from the bus driver. Also, Bay Aging’s VAAACares team completed a statewide VIRTUAL training to certify twenty-five additional health coaches. Statewide Health Coaches are conducting telephonic interventions and when needed, will pick-up food from local sources and deliver directly to patients’ doors.

For [Senior Connections](#), a successful remote work environment has depended upon on reliable access to technology. The agency refurbished and updated donated laptops for staff to use at home. Next, they shifted Office 365 in the Microsoft Cloud, and voila: greater accessibility to their data from any device, anytime, anywhere and new tools for better collaboration and communication among staff. Now, staff can come together virtually as a team!

At [LAAA](#), the Elder Resource team oversees many programs, such as insurance counseling and family support groups. In lieu of face-to-face meetings, LAAA’s Elder Resources (ER) team has successfully continued to operate via tools such as FaceTime, GoToMeeting, and the telephone. They’ve even added a new family support session called *Coffee Chat with Lori*, which allows caregivers and/or older adults who are feeling isolated or stressed to reach out and receive support.

Along with Crossroads Community Services Board, STEPS, Inc., and United Way of Prince Edward County, [Piedmont Senior Resources \(PSR\)](#) serves as a lead sponsor of the [South Central Virginia Nonprofit Network](#), a collective of area non-profits coordinating to support the community and each other. The Network aims to centralize the coordination of resources and assistance in the Piedmont region. By pooling resources and creativity, the South Central Virginia Nonprofit Network is raising awareness to reach rural residents without Internet access.