

## **INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN DUKE**

**Brian, can you give the readers an overview of what the Area Agency on Aging is?**

The Bucks County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has its origins in work begun by the County of Bucks in 1966 to help older citizens of Bucks County. Area Agencies on Aging were formed as a result of the Older Americans Act. Through planning and the implementation and provision of a variety of services and programs, the AAA seeks to enhance the quality of life of the older persons of Bucks County.

Specifically the AAA works to develop, offer and manage services to help persons 60 years of age and older maintain their independence in their homes and communities.

The office of the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging is located at 30 East Oakland Avenue in Doylestown PA and can be reached by calling 215-348-0510.

**How is the AAA funded?**

The Bucks County Area Agency on Aging is financed by federal, state and county funds as well as participant contributions. The state funding is unique in that it comes from the Pennsylvania lottery.

**How many people work in your office and what do they do?**

The AAA is staffed by over 50 staff that fulfill several functions. These include among others: information and referral, care planning and management, insurance counseling, volunteer recruitment, retention and management, supervision, liaison with community organizations and senior community centers.

**Describe the programs that are run by the AAA.**

The AAA provides services in three main areas:

**1) Community Services –**

*Information and Referral*

The AAA has a trained staff available to answer questions and offer referrals to other agencies in the communities of Bucks County. Older persons living in Bucks County and their caregivers can contact the AAA to ask questions about services available, helpful ways to support caregivers, access to transportation or nutrition and other services.

*Nutritional Services*

Hot meals are served at 11 of the Senior Community Centers located throughout the County, Monday through Friday. For those persons not able to prepare meals, home delivered meals can be provided.

### *Transportation*

The AAA subsidizes transportation for older persons in getting to and from the Senior Community centers, medical facilities, human service agencies, libraries, adult day services, pharmacies, banks, RSVP volunteer assignments and food shopping. To arrange transportation please call Bucks County Transport toll free at 1-888-795-0740.

### *Health Insurance Counseling*

Through the APPRISE program, trained volunteers are available in the community to offer health insurance counseling to older persons and their families. Questions about Medicare Part D, Medicare, Medicaid or Medical Assistance, HMO's, Medicare Gap Insurance Coverage, and Long Term Care Insurance can be answered through APPRISE.

### *Health and Wellness*

The Prime Time Health program offers educational programs in the community regarding health promotion and disease/injury prevention. Examples include the Project MEDS on prescribed medications and the Healthy Steps program on falls prevention.

### *Volunteer Opportunities*

The RSVP, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, provides opportunities for persons age 55 and older to volunteer in a variety of settings throughout Bucks County. Call 215-340-1210 to get more information.

## **2) Long Term Care Services –**

### *Assessment and Care Management*

Some older persons in Bucks County may require long term care services. These services are provided in a variety of settings from in-home services to a nursing facility. The AAA provides assessments in appropriate cases which help to determine what services would be helpful to a person. Care management services develop plans to meet care needs, coordinate with providers to make sure services are delivered properly and help to persons and meet current and future needs. Some services are subsidized and individual discussions with AAA staff can help determine eligibility. Support is also available to provide support and financial assistance to caregivers.

### *Nursing Facility Care*

The AAA provides assessments for persons who are seeking Medical Assistance or Medicaid funds to pay for nursing facility care.

### *In-Home Services*

The AAA subsidizes In-Home Services for older persons in Bucks County who meet eligibility criteria. Aides are available through referral via the AAA or with private companies who can help with personal care and other necessary activities such as shopping or laundry.

### *Adult Day Services*

Adult Day Services provide daytime supervision and activities for participants. Older persons participating in an adult day program may require supervision and have families that are unable to meet that need, may need socialization or may live with physical or mental challenges which require services not offered by a Senior Community Center. The AAA subsidizes Adult Day services for persons who meet eligibility criteria.

## **3) Protective and Advocacy Services**

### *Protective Services*

The AAA provides protective services for the older persons of Bucks County. If there is a concern about potential abuse, exploitation, neglect or abandonment, the AAA can be contacted by calling 800-243-3767.

### *Ombudsman*

If a person in Bucks County has a concern about the care of persons in long term care facilities such as nursing homes, boarding homes, personal care homes or the care of persons receiving care in the community, they may contact the Ombudsman at the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging.

### *Legal Services*

The AAA contracts with Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania to provide information, advice and counseling to older adults. For more information call 215-781-1111.

## **Are there programs available for area seniors regardless of their income and assets?**

All citizens of Bucks County can contact the AAA. Our community services such as health and wellness programs, information and referral services, insurance counseling, and volunteer opportunities are available to anyone regardless of income. Anyone can also contact our protective services, ombudsman services.

Subsidized long term care services do have income and clinical eligibility criteria which would be reviewed with a staff member at the AAA.

## **Describe the Senior Centers**

Bucks County is home to 13 Senior Community Centers. All of these offer activities, education, and opportunities for socialization. Each school district area in the County has a Senior Community Center. Eleven of the Senior Community Centers offer congregate meal programs so attendees can have a hot meal during the week, Monday through Friday. Any person over the age 60 and over can attend activities at a senior center and/or receive a meal.

## **Describe the Adult Day Services program**

Adult Day Services provide daytime supervision and activities for participants. Older persons participating in an adult day program may require supervision and have families that are unable to meet that need, may need socialization or may live with physical or mental challenges which require services not offered by a Senior Community Center. The AAA subsidizes Adult Day services for persons who meet eligibility criteria.

## **What kind of services can the AAA offer for seniors who wish to remain in their homes?**

The AAA offers assessment, care management services and through care management arranges for the delivery of personal care, in-home and home health services as needed. A person's income and clinical needs may qualify them for subsidies or cost sharing. Information and referral services would also provide connections with providers of service in the communities of Bucks County.

## **What is the PDA 60+ Waiver program? (Community Choice Initiative)**

The PDA Waiver program serves those adults age 60 and up who are clinically and financially eligible for Medicaid-paid nursing home care and provides services at home to individuals who might otherwise be admitted to a nursing facility. A person eligible for

the PDA 60+ Waiver is age 60 or over, requires nursing facility level of care, prefers to remain at home and can be safely cared for, has an income of up to \$1911 per month and assets up to \$8,000, excluding their residence.

### **How does one become part of the Waiver program?**

We encourage Bucks County residents to contact the Bucks County Area Agency on Aging to discuss their care needs. Discussions with information and referral staff and care managers can best determine needs, appropriate services and eligibility.

### **What kind of protective services does the AAA offer?**

Adult Protective Services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help those Pennsylvania residents age 60 or older who are at imminent risk of physical or emotional abuse, abandonment, exploitation, or neglect. Those calling to report elder abuse need not give their name. Call 1-800-243-3767.

### **What kind of information, such as brochures, etc. is available for people to obtain at the AAA?**

The AAA has a brochure which provides an overview of all of the services offered by the AAA. The information and referral services are also available to help a person determine what may be needed. Brochures are also available for many of the services offered by the AAA.

### **Are there opportunities for people to do volunteer work at the AAA?**

The RSVP program of the Bucks County AAA provides volunteer opportunities for any resident of Bucks County who is age 55 and older. Volunteers serve as mentors to school children, help non-profit organizations, deliver meals to homebound persons and many other opportunities. In the past year, over 700 volunteers provided over 116,000 hours of service through 130 volunteer stations. To find out more about opportunities which may match a person's interests call 215-340-1210.

### **Are there any differences between the services provided by your office and those provided by the Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging, which is known as the Montgomery County Office of Aging and Adult Services (MCAAS)?**

Area Agencies on Aging offer or arrange for the delivery of the same array of services. An AAA may have different responsibilities depending upon a county's organization. For example the Montgomery County Office of Aging and Adult Services may offer health services or other services in addition to those offered by the AAA.

**What would you say are the most important points the readers of this article should take away about the AAA?**

**The AAA is available to help.** It is a **source of information**- both to identify services and/or help people think through what questions they should be asking through information and referral services. It is a **source to access care** as a comprehensive agency which assesses the need for long term care, plans and manages care. **It protects older citizens** through ombudsman, protective services and legal aid. **It engages all citizens** to become connected and serve their communities through meaningful volunteerism and employment.