



## DAS thanks Assistant Deputy Commissioner Abby Cox for her years of service

Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Aging Services (DAS) Assistant Deputy Commissioner **Abby Cox** will be leaving the division, effective Jan. 7, 2022.

We will miss her, but we wish her the best in her new position. She became DAS Director in April 2016.

In her time as Director and then Assistant Deputy Commissioner, she built strong relationships with those across the aging and disability networks.

She has always been a strong advocate for Georgia's seniors and disabled adults. Her warm, open and caring personality has made her approachable and easy to talk with.

During her time with DAS, she worked on numerous projects to expand services across Georgia.

One of her biggest accomplishments was the establishment of the Georgia Memory Net (GMN). GMN works to help families and loved ones with an early and accurate Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis.

Prior to her return to DAS (that's right, return!) she worked as a Lifelong Planning Coordinator with DAS from 2005 to 2007.

She also worked as a social worker, Aging Services Coordinator for the Georgia Council on Aging and then the Executive Director of the Georgia Gerontology Society.

Cox holds a Master of Social Work (MSW), and she received both her MSW and Gerontology Certificate from the University of Georgia. Her bachelor's degree is from The University of the South (Sewanee). She is married with two daughters, Sarah Frances and Sallie.

Abby Cox makes an impact on every person she meets. Several members of the DAS management team spoke about their time working with Abby and extended their warm wishes as she embarks on her new adventure.

Abby, thank you for your leadership these last few years at DAS. Your enthusiasm, your empathy



**Abby Cox**

and your positive spirit have always impressed me. I will never forget the work we accomplished together. You have been an amazing boss! Sincerely, **Allison Bernal, Livable Communities Section Manager**

Abby, it's been a joy to work with you and that crackpot humor of yours during your latest stint in DAS. I have appreciated your leadership through the sometimes difficult dynamics of the job and how you did your best to be attentive to the needs of our employees as well as the AAAs.

Even though you will still be in Atlanta, I will miss hearing the latest happenings with the girls and simply will miss you. Good luck with your new adventure, I know you will be just fine! **Arvine Brown, Program Integrity Section Manager**

Abby started at DAS a few months before I did. When Pat [King] and David [Blake] would talk about "our new director," their faces would light up.

They quickly taught me that Abby was in full support of FSIU and was a joy to work for. Pat would often tell

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me that it was Abby who kept her sane when the bureaucracy got too much to handle. FSIU will miss you, Abby! **Anna Thomas, FSIU Section Manager**

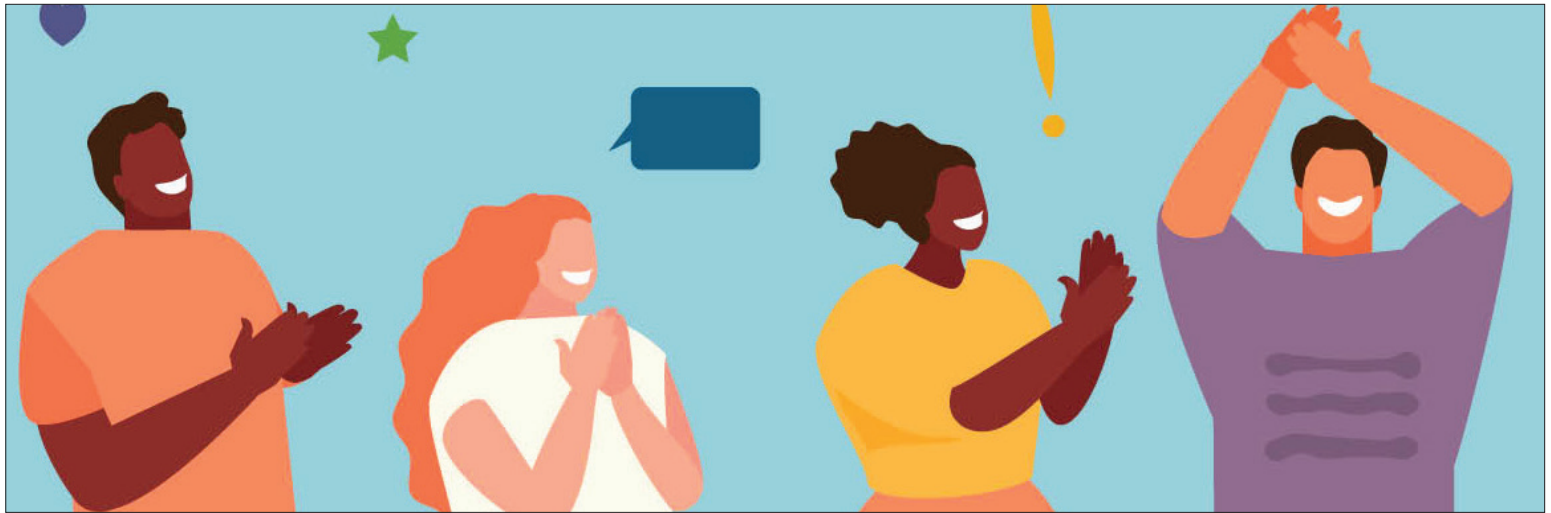
It has been such a pleasure to work under Abby's leadership. I've known Abby since she worked as a lifelong planning coordinator with DAS. She is an inspirational leader who truly cares about our constituents, network and the DAS team.

She provides words of encouragement, will clear the path for you and take on the difficult issues. Better stand back if she sits up straight on the edge of her chair, because she is about to lay the hammer down! I love that about her! We will miss you; I will miss you.

Wish you all the best, **Jeni Coyne, Access to Services Section Manager**

Thank you, Abby, for showing compassion for the work we do in DAS. You will be missed! **Cathy Bahadur, APS Section Manager**

# Staff Shoutouts



A big staff shoutout goes to **Jennifer Hogan** for her work and leadership with the DAS Gift Drive. This is work that she leads on top of her regular job, and it is a massive undertaking! Because of the increased awareness of the Light Up the Holidays Campaign, we have more and more individuals and organizations participating (there were over 500 clients under Public Guardianship that requested gifts this year alone). This is great, but that also leads to more logistics to tackle. Hogan does it all with such grace. Thank you, Jennifer, for your leadership and dedication to ensuring that our clients under guardianship receive a gift this holiday season.

The **ADRC GeorgiaCares team** has worked non-stop recently for Medicare Open Enrollment. Incredible work by the entire team!

**Christine Williams**, GeorgiaCares Team Lead has been with DAS since August 2010. Christine is supportive, organized and data-oriented. She ensures team members are thoroughly trained and prepared for success and ready for the annual Medicare Open Enrollment period from Oct. 15 - Dec. 7. Christine sends daily emails to the team, which include team member schedules, Medicare updates, pertinent data and inspirational

messages to help team members stay positive. Under Christine's steady leadership, the team pulled together to provide excellent customer service to Georgia's Medicare beneficiaries. Excellent job, Christine! Thank you for your dedication and service.

**Antoinette Gardner** has been with DAS since Aug. 2019, and she is the Call Center Supervisor for the GeorgiaCares State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). This is her first year as supervisor, and she stepped into the role with ease. Antoinette successfully managed and assigned 1,481 Medicare request for assistance forms to ensure clients received counseling services during the annual Open Enrollment. She implemented a new tracking process to manage the high volume of requests. Antoinette is truly a team player, and awesome leader. She is always willing to help and support the staff. Thanks for all you do, Antoinette!

A special shout-out to the **GeorgiaCares newbies, Warevetta Askew, Lisa Williams and Yasmeen Robins**. Warey began in Sept., Lisa began in Nov. and Yasmeen is our newest team member and began in Dec. They have been working diligently to complete the required DHS new hire curriculum and Medicare intensive training program

to obtain their counselor certification. Welcome to the team!

**Mandel Jones** is the GeorgiaCares SHIP Coordinator and Trainer. He's been with DAS since Feb. 2020. Mandel has successfully implemented the CMS training modules for 7 new employees. The training modules cover Original Medicare, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Supplement Insurance, Medicare Fraud, Preventive Services, Medicare and Individuals with Disabilities, Prescription Drug Coverage, Financial Assistance Programs and more. Kudos to Mandel for the countless hours of virtual training sessions to ensure each new staff person understood Medicare.

**Anna Moses and Jannaea Adams** are seasoned GeorgiaCares Medicare counselors. Anna has been with DAS since Dec. 2018 and Jannaea since Jan. 2019. Anna is a certified bilingual counselor, and both have counseled thousands of Medicare beneficiaries. A shout-out to each of them for their dedication and commitment to help Georgia's 1.7 million Medicare beneficiaries. It's a tall task that takes patience and a heart that truly cares. Hats off to Anna and Jannaea! Thank you, and everyone on the GeorgiaCares team, for your hard work!

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# Staff Shoutouts

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It takes a special people to educate individuals on Medicare. The work is challenging and requires staff to continually learn new information. In addition to the call center, the staff manage the SHIP and MIPPA grants and provide technical assistance to 6 contractors. Processes change, new requirements are implemented and deadlines are continuous, but the staff rise to the occasion each time. The team members are amazing! Way to go **Christine Williams, Antoinette Gardner, Jannaea Adams, Warevetta Askew, Nadine Dixon, Lashonda Edwards, Mandel Jones, Anna Moses, Yasmeen Robins, Jessica Shelton and Lisa Williams!**

Shoutout to APS Case Manager, **Amber Johnson** from CSRA East. There was a lady in Burke County (not a client of APS) who was on the news and had been without water for over a year. Amber connected with the vice mayor to identify resources to fix the woman's well and get her water working. Even with three vacancies in her unit and an increased caseload, she still took the initiative to assist the woman in need. She has also partnered with city administrators by connecting them with families in need for Thanksgiving dinners. Amber always looks for ways to help and provide outreach to the community. Great job!

Great job by Lead Worker **Miranda Brill**. She had a case with a senior, Ms. D., who was being taken advantage of by people offering to complete renovations on her home. The perpetrators were not trustworthy and had criminal records. They latched on to Ms. D. and gave her loving attention to gain her trust. They moved her out of her home and took her out of state to Tennessee. They also moved into her home and exploited her severely in the name of "renovating" her house. Law enforcement didn't feel it necessary to take action since Ms. D. said she "wanted" their involvement. Although Brill and her supervisor, Amber Allen, felt it was somewhat emotional exploitation/manipulation, they did not feel they could substantiate during the first case given her own statements and law enforcement involvement.

Between cases, there was a lot of involvement with these alleged perpetrators and various attorneys. Attorney Penland in Ringgold got very involved and recognized suspicion in the events taking place and a new case was called in. With Penland, Ms. D.'s conservator and Brill working together, Ms. D. was moved to safety in two days. Brill utilized supervision effectively and Mr. Penland, Brill and Allen got in front of the judge that very afternoon and emergency guardianship was given to Mr. Penland.

Brill secured a ton of financial information from various

parties to complete her investigation. She also organized placement in an assisted living facility. She got the client all her pre-admission testing and took her to her new placement. She even ate lunch there with her to ensure that she felt safe and secure while making the transition. Thank you, Miranda and Amber, for your great work!

Case Manager **Bobbie Rushing** recently worked on a case that led to an arrest. Allegations of exploitation had come in after the client's daughter had used client's funds on Cash App. During the investigation, Rushing was able to get the banking information from the month of the exploitation. There was also a printout that showed multiple Cash App expenditures. This information allowed law enforcement to subpoena the Cash App information. Detective William Womack with Dalton Police Department charged the daughter with eight counts of Financial Card Transaction Fraud. Rushing also encouraged Det. Womack to add Elder Financial exploitation to the charges. This is a huge accomplishment and victory for Bobbie Rushing's case work!

Great job to Case Manager **Patti Chastain**. She received a call from the Dillard Police Department about one of her newest ongoing clients being at a neighbors' house naked from the waist down trying to get in their house. He has dementia. APS Supervisor Emily Shook advised Chastain to go on out and ensure that law enforcement got an order to apprehend (OTA), as this client lives near her and had walked quite a way to get to this residence.

She went. The client refused to go to the hospital, so Chastain and Shook agreed to have law enforcement transport him home. Then, Chastain and the officer went to the probate court to get the OTA. The officer was hesitant to go, as he'd been told that OTAs couldn't be obtained this way. Patti called the probate court and spoke with an unhelpful clerk who stated that, if the client wasn't in danger, the OTA wouldn't be granted.

Chastain was sure to mention how the client walked in his state and was scratched up from going through the woods, etc. The probate judge in Rabun County didn't question them and granted the OTA stating that there was a pattern, and they needed to help. The officer was amazed that this could be done and stated that he'd have done this a long time ago if he knew OTAs could be done like this. Chastain saw this through and is working on his guardianship packet today, as the family isn't doing anything to help their family member. The client meanwhile is at the hospital still waiting for a placement. Thank you, Patti, for thinking outside the box and helping the client.

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## How DAS sections serve Georgians: 60 seconds with Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) protects adults with disabilities (18 and older) and older adults (65 and older) who are not residents of long-term care facilities and who are:

- Unable to protect their own interests,
- Harmed or threatened with harm through action or inaction by another, or
- At risk due to lack of knowledge or required resources, poor health or physical or mental impairment

### When a report is made:

When a report meets criteria for APS involvement, APS will simultaneously conduct an investigation and assessment to determine whether abuse, neglect and/or exploitation (ANE) has occurred and identify the client's needs. If a decision is made that ANE has occurred at the hands of someone other than the client, a report will be sent to law enforcement. APS will continue to assess for the need for interventions and work with the client to identify appropriate interventions

The role of APS is to investigate reports, deter ongoing maltreatment of elder adults and adults with disabilities

and minimize the risk of maltreatment from occurring in the future. As an investigative entity, APS cannot act as a placement resource, but it can and will act as an advocate and strive for the least restrictive measures to ensure adults' safety and independence.

### Types of abuse investigated by APS:

#### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is using physical force to coerce or to inflict bodily harm. It often, but not always, causes physical discomfort, pain or injury. It may include the willful deprivation of essential needs, such as medical care, food or water.

#### Financial abuse or exploitation

Financial abuse or exploitation is described as improperly or illegally using a person's resources for the benefit of another person. Examples include using power of attorney to gain access to an adult's assets for personal gain, or using undue influence, false representation and/or other means to gain access to an adult's government checks.

#### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse refers to any kind of sexual behavior directed toward an at-risk adult without the person's full knowledge and consent. A spouse, partner, family member or other trusted person can perpetrate sexual abuse.

#### Neglect

Neglect occurs when a caregiver refuses or fails to provide essential needs (food, water, shelter, medical care, etc.) to the degree that it harms or threatens to harm an older and/or disabled adult.

#### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse includes using tactics such as harassment, insults, intimidation, isolation or threats that cause mental or emotional anguish. It diminishes the person's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth.

#### Self-neglect

Self-neglect is defined as failing to perform essential self-care such as depriving oneself of necessities such as food, water or medication. Consciously putting oneself in harm's way or being unable to handle needs of day-to-day living because of medical, mental health or other disabilities is self-neglect, but it is not a crime.

### How to reach APS

To report at-risk adult abuse, call 866-552-4464, option 3. Click [here](#) to make a report online and click "Report Elder Abuse."



# Anniversaries & New Hires



## DAS celebrates December milestone anniversaries with staff

DAS honors the milestone anniversaries of our long-time employees. This December, DAS celebrates anniversaries for 24 employees. Thank you for your many **years of service** to help Georgia's seniors and disabled adults live healthier and stronger lives.

**Tora Dale Reddick**, 40

**Diane Roberson**, 36

**Stacey Truelove**, 28

**Jeri Bennett**, 27

**Sonya Seymour**, 27

**Gwendolyn Cloud**, 26

**David (Bryan) Hay**, 19

**Deanna Mosley**, 19

**Lisa Sewell**, 19

**LaKesia Butler**, 16

**Adriane Davis**, 16

**Onyeka Erigbuem**, 16

**Patti Chastain**, 15

**Daunte Thompson**, 15

**Darlene Spears**, 14

**Angela None-Reed**, 10

**Meagan Shepherd**, 10

**Tiffany Jackson**, 8

**Kathy Benton**, 7

**Jaleesa Haney**, 7

**Amber Johnson**, 7

**Nicole Gardner**, 6

**Tracy Ector**, 5

**Cynthia Toby**, 5

## Several new hires joined DAS as part of an integral team

DAS would like to welcome several new team members. Welcome to the DAS team! They include:

**Natalie Bennett**

**Deforia Andrews**

**Sharayna Griffin**

**Shanee Knight**

**Rana McDaniel**

**Aimee Stowe**

**Xernna Nieves**

**Yasmeen Robins**

# DAS Highlights

## **DAS employee reaches incredible 40-year milestone helping Georgia seniors and adults with disabilities**

Tora Dale Reddick has dedicated her life to helping Georgia's seniors and adults with disabilities. This December, Reddick celebrates 40 years with DAS. She currently serves as an Adult Protective Services (APS) Supervisor in the 9th District, Heart of Georgia Region. She loves her work and the people she works with. She says they keep her feeling young!

Reddick was one of the first APS investigators in the state of Georgia and has spent four decades helping the elderly and disabled adult population. Prior to joining APS, she was looking for employment and her aunt was a supervisor with the DHS Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS). Her aunt encouraged her to take the state test to qualify to work at DFCS. She said that she had no idea what DFCS really did, but she took the test and passed. The first job that came available was in her hometown, and she was hired. She began work on Dec. 1, 1981. During her four decades on the job, Reddick worked on several cases that stick out in her mind.

"From my DFCS days in APS, I helped put an elderly gentleman in touch with his estranged family. We filmed a video of him sending greetings to his family, and several of his relatives traveled to Georgia to visit with him. He had cut off contact with his relatives when he knew he would be going to Federal Prison. The family was so excited to find out he was still alive."

Another case that Reddick remembers fondly involved a young lady who had a developmental disability.

"She had been in foster care and then in a developmental disability facility in Augusta. When she turned 18, the state became her legal guardian, and I received my first APS case. Fast-forward years later and she is still my client but living in another county, where she also has another DFCS case manager. She is involved with the developmental disability residential program and developmental disability service center. At the center, she met a young man, and they fell in love. After a year of having the couple meet every requirement that was put before them, the county DFCS director agreed to let them get married. The developmental disability residential staff helped the couple plan a church wedding. The DFCS county director walked her down the aisle, and the other case manager and I were seated as her family. They are still married to this day and involved with the residential program."

Reddick has seen a great deal during her many years with APS and has made a difference in the lives of countless Georgians. Her favorite part of her job includes getting to know the staff and doing things to make them feel important, even though the pandemic has made that harder to do in person. Mostly, knowing that they are making a difference in the lives of the elderly and disabled is her favorite part of her job. Reddick has seen firsthand how APS cases have changed over time. She said, "Cases now are a lot more complex than when I started 40 years ago. In those days, it was the elderly person who needed assistance with shopping, housekeeping, transportation, etc. Now almost all of our cases involve exploitation." In fiscal year 2020, 50,158 reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation were made to APS. 23,806 of those cases were substantiated, meaning alleged abuse, neglect or exploitation were confirmed.



**Tora Reddick**

In Reddick's spare time, she enjoys volunteering. She is active with General Federation of Women's Clubs (GWFC) Sylvania Junior Woman's Club, Screven County History Buffs and Wreaths Across America. She also volunteers with her local soup kitchen, and whenever she finds additional time, enjoys reading.

DAS is so grateful for Reddick's 40 years of dedicated service and compassion for Georgia's seniors and disabled adults. We look forward to many more years of having her on our hardworking team. When asked what advice Reddick would give to others working in the aging and disability network, she said, "Don't lose the passion for wanting to make a difference. Learn to try and find a little humor in even the worst days and cases. If you can't laugh at yourself or with your co-workers, you're not going to make it."

## **DAS Light Up the Holidays Gift Drive provides gifts for hundreds under public guardianship**

Since its inception in 2014, the DAS Light Up the Holidays gift drive for seniors and disabled adults under public guardianship has grown every year. The gift drive was started in 2014 by Kim Grier, who worked in the Public Guardianship Office (PGO). When created, the gift drive aimed to get needed basics to a few clients. These basics included socks and blankets. When Grier left for another opportunity, Amanda Carter James in the Forensic Special Initiatives Unit (FSIU) took the lead, and the focus became asking the clients what they wanted and needed. The most requested items include clothing. PGO clients are

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# Area Agencies on Aging



**Gift drive organizer Jennifer Hogan and fellow DAS employee, Leigh DeBary organize donations.**



**DAS employees and volunteers accept donations for gift drive.**

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low income and often cannot leave their homes to go shopping. Among the clothing items most requested are underwear, socks, pajamas, sweaters and shoes.

Since 2018, the gift drive has been coordinated and led by DAS Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, Jennifer Hogan. Hogan does an incredible job of managing the gift drive, soliciting donations and rallying volunteers to assist with creating wish lists, packing gifts and distributing them to case managers for delivery. The gift drive relies 100% on volunteers, and this year, 585 lists of requested items were successfully fulfilled!

Case managers across the state say that the gifts are always well-received, as many clients under public guardianship otherwise would not receive a gift at all. Case managers say that clients' reactions are priceless. Clients cry, hug and are very appreciative of anything they receive.

Gift drive coordinator Hogan said, "The gift drive is important to me, because I know our clients are at risk for

not getting anything during the holidays. Many because they have outlived their families, or their family is unable to provide something for them. My goal is to try to get at least one thing for every client. Thanks to generous sponsors, we can usually provide much more to the clients." Thank you to Jennifer, the volunteers, case managers and all who donated to the gift drive. The ability to light up the holidays for those living under public guardianship makes the holidays special for all involved.

## **Southern Georgia Regional Commission AAA nomination receives Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving Award**

Lynn Platt was awarded the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving (RCI) 2021 Georgia Family Caregiver of the Year Award on Nov. 1. Carrie Harris, Community Engagement Coordinator for the RCI said that three caregivers are recognized and honored annually in Georgia by the RCI. Harris went on to state, "We want them to get the appreciation that they deserve, and we want to celebrate them." Each of the three statewide winners receives a check for \$1,000, a plaque from the RCI, a congratulatory letter from Mrs. Rosalynn Carter and a thoughtful gift basket. Senior-Link was the sponsor for this year's RCI Caregiver of the Year Awards, and representative Eugene Bell was on hand to congratulate Lynn and represent Senior-Link.

Platt was nominated by the Southern Georgia Care-Net Coalition, which is operated by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC-AAA). Connie Miss is the Southern Georgia Care-Net Coalition Coordinator and said, "Lynn is an extraordinary caregiver and has been taking care of her uncle, who was born with special needs, for most of her life. During this time,



**SGRC-AAA Director Scott Courson, Family Caregiver of the Year Lynn Platt, SGRC-AAA Communications Specialist Kimberly Rodgers & SGRC-AAA Care-Net Coordinator Connie Miss after Platt receives award.**

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# Area Agencies on Aging

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she has worked outside of the home, while also providing caregiving duties in the home and community. Lynn has provided many unpaid hours of care for her uncle to have a full and happy life. For those who know Lynn, her energy seems boundless, and she is always focused on helping others. We are delighted to be able to honor her today."

SGRC-AAA Director Scott Courson said, "Through all of the stress that comes along with being a caregiver, Lynn has still maintained a servant's heart and deep commitment to care for others. She embodies all that a caregiver should be. We were pleased to select Lynn as the Southern Georgia Care-Net 2021 Family Caregiver of the Year for our region and to nominate her for the RCI 2021 Family Caregiver of the Year for all of Georgia." In addition to being a wonderful caregiver, she is also the director of the Senior Center in Pierce County, which is operated by Action Pact, Inc.

## **Southern Georgia Regional Commission AAA welcomes Dementia Friends**

Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging Dementia Friends Champions, Connie Miss and Kimberly Rodgers, are pleased to announce that there are now six new Dementia Friends in the Southern Georgia region. The Refinery hosted the Dementia Friends information session for the community on Oct. 20.

Dementia Friends is a global movement that seeks to change the way people think, act and talk about dementia. Developed by the Alzheimer's Society in the United Kingdom, the Dementia Friends initiative is widely underway in Georgia and across the United States. When participants better understand what dementia is and how it affects families, they become empowered to make a difference for people living with dementia.

The one-hour information session is led by a Dementia Friends Champion. Participants learn what dementia is, what it's like to live with the disease and some tips for communicating with people who have dementia. Everyone who attends is asked to turn their new understanding of dementia into a practical action that could help someone who is living with dementia or a caretaker of someone living with dementia.

The SGRC-AAA Dementia Friend Champions are available to deliver the information session in the SGRC region, at no cost, for any group. To schedule an in person or virtual session, please contact Connie Miss or Kimberly Rodgers at 912-285-6097.

Learn more about the Dementia Friends program [here](#). If you are interested in arranging an informational session, please contact Aline Stone at [aline.stone@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:aline.stone@dhs.ga.gov)



**SGRC-AAA welcomes six new Dementia Friends after informational session.**

## **CSRA Area Agency on Aging senior center director honored by Congressman**

Congressman Jody Hice honored our Jefferson County Leisure Center Director, Tammie Bennett Lewis, during a presentation on Dec. 3. Please see the social media post from Congressman Hice's Facebook page below. View full post [here](#). Great job, Tammie, and all senior center directors across the state!



**Congressman Hice's district director, Jessica Hayes (right) presented the Hice Headliner award to Tammie (left).**