

NIAAA'S SENIOR NEWSLETTER

January



1111 S. Alpine Rd
Suite 600
Rockford IL 61108

815-226-4901
www.nwilaaa.org
info@nwilaaa.org

Hello 2026! Happy New Year!
Wishing you wellness, joy, and a wonderful
year ahead!

OFFICE CLOSED

January 1st & 2nd, 2026

in observance of the
New Year holiday.

We will reopen on
Monday, January 5th, 2026.

Happy New Year!



Letter from the Executive Director

This past year has been one of significant growth and momentum for Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging (NIAAA). Our Advisory Committee expanded from eight to fifteen members, bringing broader community representation, and we welcomed five new Board members as four long-time leaders retired.

We strengthened outreach by launching our monthly newsletter in February and hosting four Senior Pop-Up Fairs, with plans to expand next year. Legislative engagement remained a priority: we met with twelve state and four federal legislators, co-hosted a Legislative Breakfast with Lifescape Community Services, and participated in statewide advocacy events in Freeport and DeKalb County to highlight the importance of Older Americans Act funding.

Community partnerships flourished. We collaborated with the City of Rockford on the June 10 Staycation event for residents 62 and older; hosted a Rockford University intern who supported programs and research; and increased regional visibility through two photo contests across our nine counties. Our digital footprint also grew—our Facebook following rose from 283 to 415, and we launched a redesigned, more accessible website now available in 19 languages through Google Translate.

We continued to invest in dementia and safety initiatives, including a \$1,000 donation to the Rockford Public Library for dementia related materials; hosting their DigiLibrary and computer classes; supporting Falls Prevention Week with UI Health and Sullivan Home Improvement; and offering an Early-Stage Memory Loss Support Group facilitated by Satori Pathway.

Our most significant undertaking has been exploring the development of a new senior center in Rockford. After evaluating multiple sites and collaborating closely with community partners and city leadership, the proposal was presented to the City Council on December 15th and advanced to Committee for further consideration. A vote is anticipated in January.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to strengthen aging services throughout Northwestern Illinois.

Jeffrey Barnes
Executive Director
Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging



As we step into the New Year, our staff would like to thank our community for your continued trust and support. It's an honor to serve you, and we look forward to another year of working together, building connections, and making a positive impact. Wishing you health, happiness, and a wonderful New Year



~ NJAAA Staff





Stress-Busting Programs

Dementia & Chronic Illness



When & Where

Wednesdays for 9 Weeks
January 7th-March 4th

10:00 AM-11:30 AM- Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging, 1111 S. Alpine Rd, Rockford, IL. **DEMENTIA FOCUS**

2:00 PM-3:30 PM- Lifescape Community Services, 615 N. Longwood St, Rockford, IL. **CHRONIC ILLNESS FOCUS**

5:00 PM-6:30 PM- Lifescape Adult Day Program, 1330 S. Alpine Rd, Rockford, IL. **DEMENTIA FOCUS**

Contact

Registration Required!
Call 815-490-1107
Limited to the first 10 participants per class



FREE FOR CAREGIVERS!

Take-home gifts are provided each week to help with stress management

Program Details

The Stress-Busting Program (SBP) for Family Caregivers™ is an evidence-based program that provides support to family caregivers of persons with dementia or a chronic illness. It has been proven to improve the quality of life for family caregivers who provide care to an older loved one, helping them manage their stress and cope better with their lives.

During the Stress Busting Program for Family Caregivers™, caregivers will:

- Learn about stress and its effects
- Practice stress management techniques
- Develop problem-solving skills

9-Week Stress Management Evidence-Based Program

Week 1: Getting Started

Week 2: Stress: Effects on Mind, Body and Spirit

Week 3: Caregiver Stress and Relaxation

Week 4: Facing Challenges

Week 5: Grief, Loss and Depression

Week 6: Coping with Stress

Week 7: Positive Thinking

Week 8: Taking Care of Yourself

Week 9: Choosing a Path of Wellness



Adult Protective Services



What is Elder Abuse

Elder abuse or abuse of an older adult is the intentional harming of a vulnerable person over the age of 60. Types of abuse include inflicting pain, neglect or financial exploitation. If you notice signs of abuse, like unexplained injuries, isolation or sudden changes to a person's financial situation, report them to local authorities immediately.

Types of Elder Abuse in Illinois:

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting physical pain or injury, including hitting, slapping, kicking, or restraining.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Touching, fondling, or any other sexual activity with an older adult when they are unable to understand, unwilling to consent, or are threatened or forced.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Verbal assaults, threats, harassment, or intimidation.
- **Financial Exploitation:** Misusing or withholding a person's resources, including their money or property, or making financial decisions without permission.
- **Neglect:** Failing to provide for essential needs like food, shelter, medical care, or safety. This can be active (deliberately withholding care) or passive (failing to provide needed care).
- **Abandonment:** Desertion of an elder by someone who has assumed responsibility for their care.
- **Self-Neglect:** Failing to perform essential self-care tasks that threaten their own health or safety.

What to Look For: signs of elder abuse can include unexplained injuries, neglected hygiene, financial exploitation, and emotional/behavioral changes.

Anyone can report a case of abuse.

To report suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation and self-neglect of an adult age 60 or older or a person with disabilities age 18-59 call the statewide, 24-hour Adult Protective Services Hotline: **1-866-800-1409**.



Are you a grandparent raising a teenage grandchild?

You might be eligible for a research study if you are:

- Primary caregiver for a grandchild
- Primary caregiver is 40 or older
- Grandchild is 12 years of age or older
- Grandchild resides in the home with you at least 3 days per week
- Living anywhere within the United States
- Willing to talk by telephone, virtual, or in person

Activities: Interview, short survey, follow up phone review

Total time involved: Up to 2 hours

Compensation: \$40 gift card

For more information contact:

Principal Investigator: Tina L. Dothard Peterson, PhD, MPH, CSW, FGSA
Associate Professor

University of Cincinnati School of Social Work

Phone: 513-556-3517; Email: dothartl@ucmail.uc.edu

Facebook: @DrTinaLPeterson IRB#: 2024-0735

"University of Cincinnati is an Equal Opportunity Institution"

Your January Reset

For many of us, January is a time of new beginnings – a new year, new habits, and oftentimes new goals

for the year to come. With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season over with and the winter blues setting in, January is also an opportune time to reset and refresh your physical and virtual environments. As a caregiver, this can be especially important; taking time to declutter and reorganize both the space around us and our daily routines can help maximize our time, reduce stress, and help create more opportunities for self-care. Ready to make small changes that lead to big peace of mind? Below, you'll find simple, practical tips to help you get started.

SMALL STEPS FOR BIG PEACE OF MIND

IMPORTANT DON'T FORGET TO CARE FOR YOU!

- Block 15 minutes in your calendar for something you enjoy—reading, stretching, or a quiet cup of tea.
- Declutter your digital space
Delete unused apps and organize your phone for less stress and more focus.
- Audit your commitments:
Look at your calendar for the month and ask, Does this align with my priorities?
Remove or reschedule anything that isn't essential or doesn't bring value.

✓ *CLEAR ONE CARE SPACE AT A TIME*

PICK ONE AREA—LIKE THE MEDICATION SHELF OR A BEDSIDE TABLE—AND TIDY IT UP. A SMALL WIN REDUCES STRESS.

✓ *GIVE YOURSELF A 10-MINUTE RESET*

SET A TIMER FOR 10 MINUTES AND PUT AWAY SUPPLIES, PAPERWORK, OR LAUNDRY. SHORT BURSTS KEEP IT MANAGEABLE.

✓ *CREATE A "CARE BASKET"*

KEEP ESSENTIALS (MEDS, LOTION, TISSUES) IN ONE BASKET SO YOU'RE NOT HUNTING FOR ITEMS DURING BUSY MOMENTS.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

JOIN US AT NIAAA FOR OUR CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
SECOND THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH FROM 1:30-3PM
1111 S ALPINE RD SUITE 600, ROCKFORD IL 61108

We are enrolling individuals ages 100 and older into our research study.

**Why
volunteer for this study on
diverse aging?**

When people from all backgrounds are included in research, doctors know how to better treat or prevent diseases and help everyone age well.

Your participation may help researchers find the next big medical breakthroughs for all of us.

Opportunity to receive up to \$100!

**How
does it work?**



Participants
share
information



Information
is
protected



Researchers
study
information



Communities
benefit
from findings



Stacy L. Andersen, PhD
Thomas T. Perls, MD, MPH
Principal Investigators
Boston University field site
stacy@bu.edu; thperls@bu.edu



Visit **Longevityomics.org/humans**, call us toll-free at
(888)-333-6327, or email us at **agewell@bu.edu**



Our participant,
Herda Senhouse, was the
oldest African-American in
Massachusetts at age 113.

**Black &
African-American people:**

- Have a greater chance than White people of living to 100 years old after the age of 85.
- Represent 12% of the U.S. population but only 5% of research volunteers.



John Betharte, at age 106,
was one of our Latin-Caribbean
participants.

**Latinx &
Hispanic people:**

- Have the second highest life expectancy compared to other ethnicities.
- Make up 19% of the population, but only 1% of research volunteers.



Dementia Friendly
ILLINOIS

**BECOME A
DEMENTIA
FRIEND!**

Rockford is now a recognized Dementia Friendly Community!

As of November 2023, the City of Rockford, IL was officially recognized as the 28th Dementia Friendly Community in Illinois, as part of the Dementia Friendly America movement. A Dementia Friendly Community connects individuals in health care, social services, education, government, law enforcement, senior living, memory care, and other sectors in an effort to assist people with dementia and their caregivers.

The goal of a Dementia Friendly Community is to increase awareness of, and educate the community about, dementia; expand appropriate resources and experiences for those with dementia and their caregivers; and develop a stronger system of support and inclusion within the community.

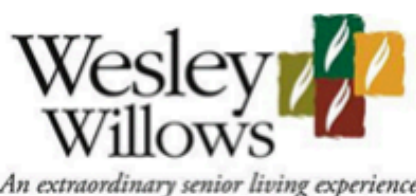
For more information and ways to participate as a community member, visit **www.dfamerica.org** or call Lifescope Community Services at 815-963-1609.

A Dementia Friend is someone who, through viewing a series of online videos, learns about what it's like to live with dementia and then turns that understanding into action. It takes less than 10 minutes to become a Dementia Friend. Anyone of any age can be a Dementia Friend - we all have a part to play in creating dementia friendly communities!

**Visit
dementiafriends.org &
become a Dementia
Friend or use the QR
code below!**



PARTNERS





Lifescape Senior Mental Health Program

The Senior Mental Health Program is here to assist with building resilience and increasing mental health well-being among older adults.

Explore Proven Strategies with the **PEARLS** Program!

**PEARLS: Program to Encourage
Active, Rewarding Lives**

Depression is NOT a
normal part of aging!

Please make referrals to:

Senior Mental Health Advocate:

Direct Ph: (815) 968-0522

Fax: (815) 963-1627

Email: SeniorMentalHealth@lifescapeservices.org

Our trained staff provides:

- Mental Health related screenings
- Education and awareness
- Home visits
- Case management and advocacy
- Problem-solving techniques
- Referrals to other support services, including referrals to mental health and health care providers

LIFESCAPE

Partners:



PEARLS

Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives



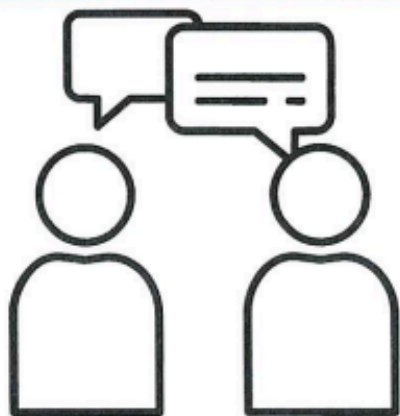
WCCMHB
Winnebago County
Community Mental
Health Board

PEARLS helps...

Feeling
Unmotivated?

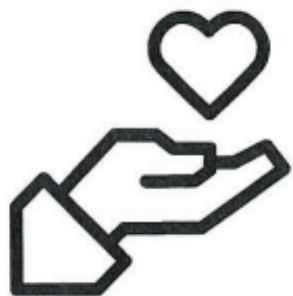
Educate & Raise Awareness

Provide education on recognizing the signs and symptoms of depression in older adults, reducing stigma, and promoting early intervention through the PEARLS approach..



Motivate & Follow Up

Ongoing encouragement with regular check-ins, progress tracking, and uplifting support



Link to Services

Referrals to other support services, including referrals to mental health and health care providers

Senior Mental Health Program

If feelings of
sadness,
hopelessness, or
being down last
for more than
two weeks...

Initiate & Coach

The Senior Mental Health Advocate offers compassionate support while teaching practical problem-solving skills and guiding participants through meaningful, goal-oriented activities to improve mood and enhance daily life.



Make the Connection

Help participants recognize how their thoughts, actions, and routines influence mood—an essential step in the PEARLS problem-solving process..

PEARLS is typically
delivered over 6 to 8 sessions
across 4 to 5 months. The
flexible format supports
steady progress toward
personal goals and improved
well-being.



FREE TAX PREPARATION FOR SENIORS

Provided by AARP Tax-Aide

We are proud to offer **FREE**, trusted tax preparation services specifically designed to support older adults and seniors in our community.



Who can use this service?

- Seniors & older adults
- Retirees
- Individuals on fixed incomes



Appointments can be made starting February 2nd



Call to schedule: 815-226-4901



Location:

1111 S Alpine Rd.
Suite 600

- ✓ IRS-certified AARP volunteers
- ✓ Accurate, confidential service
- ✓ No cost — ever

Appointments are required. Limited availability. Please call early to reserve your spot.

FACT SHEET

STEER CLEAR OF THE SWEETHEART SCAM



"Sweetheart scammers" or "romance scammers" are con artists who prey on people by pretending to fall in love with them in order to win their trust and steal their money.

THE SET-UP

Sweetheart scams often take place online, starting on dating websites or social media platforms where they have set up fake identities. Then as you develop feelings, the fraud moves to emails or texts to your personal phone.




They convince you that they are in love with you and you are in a deep committed relationship. During this time they work on grooming you, in order to manipulate your feelings. The sweetheart scammers may wait months before asking you for money.

The Attorney General's Office regularly hears from older residents or concerned family members when a scam is suspected.

You can avoid being scammed when you keep the following in mind: the warning signs, the tricks they use, the potential emotional and financial effects, plus techniques to protect yourself from these unscrupulous, fake charmers.

WARNING SIGNS OF A SWEETHEART SCAM!

The Sweetheart scammers may wait months before asking you for money. During this time they work on **GROOMING** you, which can last many months. They convince you that they are in love with you and that you are in a deep committed relationship.

-  The scammer will persuade you to move the conversation to email, text messaging or call you at home instead of communicating through the dating or social networking site.
-  Sweetheart scammers are consistently positive and upbeat, and they present a false sense of unconditional love that can seem very loving and comforting.
-  The scammer will often claim to be a U.S. citizen traveling or working overseas, for example with the military or as a teacher or a nurse.





**Illinois Attorney
General:**

**Senior Consumer
Helpline**
1-800-243-5377

**Consumer Fraud
Hotline**
1-800-386-5438

WAYS THE SCAMMER MAY ATTEMPT TO GET YOUR MONEY

I need money for...

-  **Airline tickets or travel documents to come to the U.S. to be with you**
-  **My cell phone bill or Internet access so we can keep communicating**
-  **School tuition, so I can graduate and come to the U.S. and be with you**
-  **Planning our wedding so we can get married**

Other variations of the sweetheart/romance scam:

The scammer may send the victim money orders with directions to deposit, cash and wire the money back. However, in reality, the money orders are counterfeit, leaving the victim responsible to the bank for the lost funds.

Sweetheart scammers sometimes ask their victims to make on-line purchases for them or to forward a package to another country, getting them to serve as mules to carry out illegal schemes.

AFTER-EFFECTS OF A ROMANCE SCAM

- Victims of sweetheart scams feel that they are in a committed relationship and want to believe that the scammer is telling the truth. Once you send money, more excuses and requests for money will follow as to why they are unable to meet you in person.
- Victims may experience profound grief at the loss of the relationship once they accept that it was a scam. The lost money, often thousands of dollars, adds insult to injury. The victim may also feel too embarrassed to tell anyone what has happened.
- Victims may become targets for further scams, such as when the scammer poses as an official offering to return the victim's lost money for a fee!

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BECOMING A VICTIM OF A SCAM

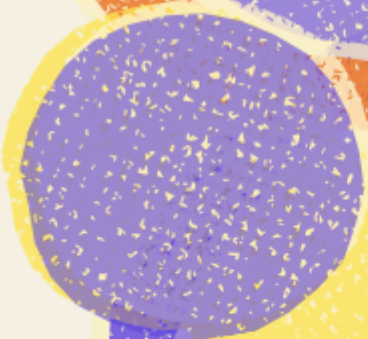
- Should you meet a sweetheart/romance scammer on social media, block the profile.
- If you receive an email soliciting you, do not open the email. Delete or send to SPAM.
- Should you receive a call, don't engage in any form of conversation.
JUST HANG UP!



If you or a loved one has fallen victim to a sweetheart/romance scam we strongly encourage you to report the scam to the Federal Trade Commission Consumer Helpline **1-877-382-4357** and the Illinois Attorney General's Senior Consumer Helpline **1-800-243-5377** or the Consumer Fraud Hotline **1-800-386-5438**. Individuals with hearing or speech disabilities can reach us by using the 7-1-1 relay service.



SENIOR RESOURCE POP-UP FAIR



Friday, March 27th, 2026

2:00pm-5:00PM

**Muslim Community Center
and Mosque**

5921 Darlene Dr, Rockford, IL

**THIS EVENT IS FREE &
OPEN TO ALL SENIORS
AND CAREGIVERS**

**QUESTIONS?
CALL: 815-226-4901**

HOSTED BY NIAAA



CLOSURE NOTICE

We will be closed on
January 19th, 2026

In Observance of
**Martin Luther King Jr.
Day**



LEARN THE HISTORY OF ROCKFORD AT MIDWAY VILLAGE MUSEUM

Dementia Friendly Rockford and the Friends of Midway Village invite loved ones with dementia and their caregivers to a free guided tour at the historic museum.

**Friday, January 30th
at 10:00 am.
Transportation
available with
reservation.**

Register with Lifescape
Community Services at
815-490-1137



Dementia
Friendly
America®





WOODLAND WANDERERS WALKING GROUP

Severson Dells Nature Center is hosting a free monthly walking group for those looking for gentle activity, community, and time in nature. We will stroll on a paved path with some mild grades, stopping for breaks near benches, for around an hour. Mobility aids welcome. Join us the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 10:00- 11:30 am.

Jan 20



Feb 17



Mar 17



Contact Us
815-335-2915



Visit Our Website
seversondells.org



Find us on Facebook
Severson Dells Nature Center