ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Branch County Commission on Aging
65 Grahl Drive, Coldwater, MI 49036
www.burnsidecenter.com
517-279-6565

BRANCH COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of the Branch County Commission on Aging is to establish and provide services for older adults by encouraging, promoting, and safeguarding the rights and abilities of our older adults so they may enjoy maximum health, well-being, and independence.

VISION

To become the primary focus (not the sole focus) for older adult activities in the county through the establishment of the senior center and by partnering with other agencies whose goals will complement the Commission on Aging's mission.

VALUES

The Commission believes the State's philosophy of "no wrong door" and to that end will provide access, information, and referral for any service to older adults that may be required throughout the county.

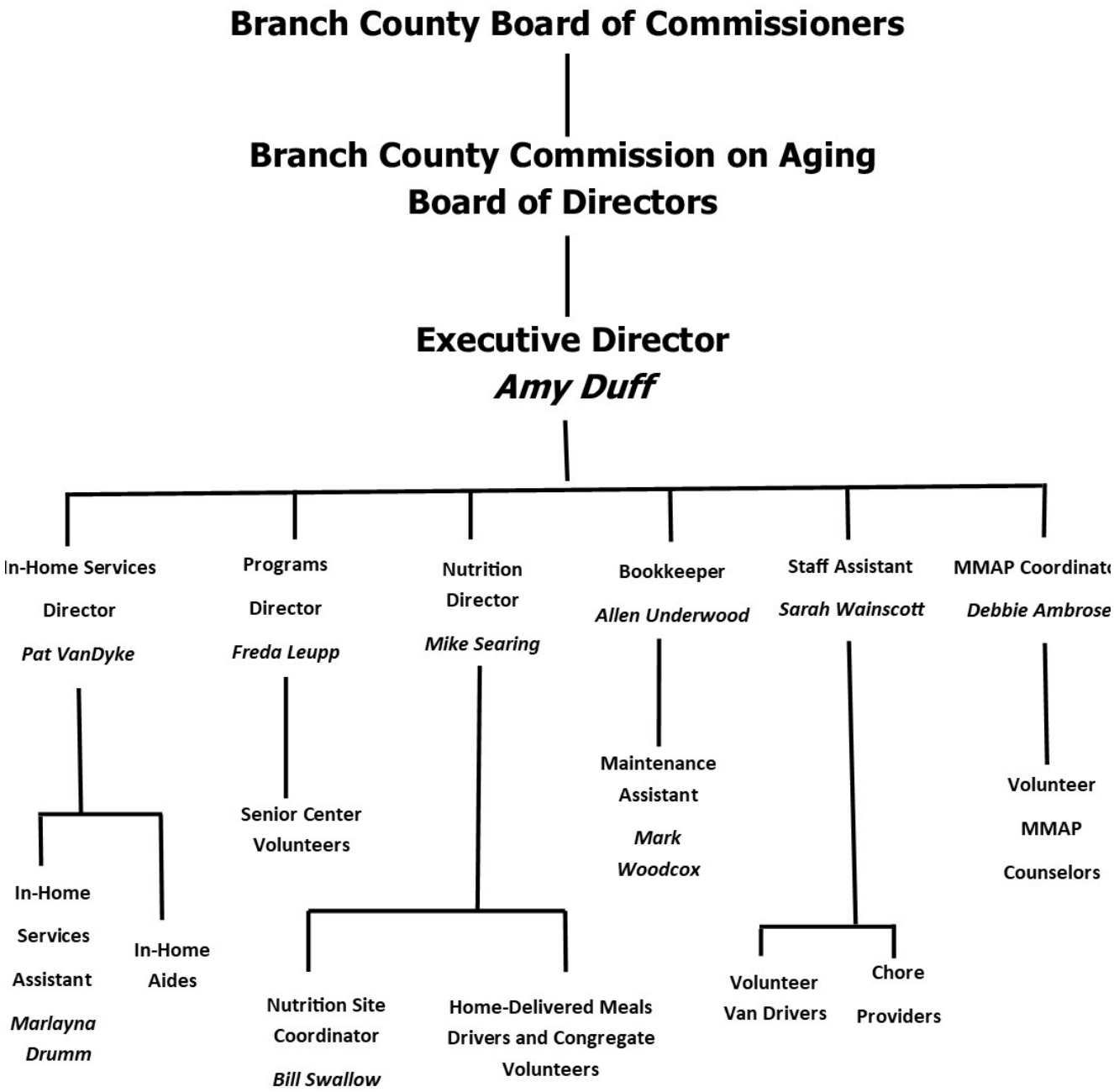
The Commission will partner with other agencies to maintain a presence throughout the county.

The Commission will solicit and promote volunteerism through the older adult community to expand its services and provide those older adults who volunteer with a sense of worth and accomplishment.

The Commission will strive to provide outreach and services to those older adults whose needs for services are the greatest.

The Commission will seek and facilitate cooperation and consensus of action through our partnerships with community agencies and governmental bodies in all areas where our missions are convergent.

BRANCH COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING
2024 STAFF



BRANCH COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Established by action of the Branch County Commissioners

Janis Olney – Chairman
Julie Hurley – Vice Chairman
Don Thrasher – Secretary/Treasurer
Gordon Gentry
John Petzko
John Hutchinson
Kimberly Lindsey

Commissioner Tim Stoll – Liaison from Branch County Board of Commissioners

The Board of Directors represents the older adult population of Branch County. Monthly meetings in 2024 were held at 65 Grahl Drive, Coldwater on the third Tuesday at 2:00 p.m.

2024 STAFF

Amy Duff – Executive Director
Pat VanDyke – In-Home Services Director
Marlayna Drumm – Assistant In-Home Services Director
Freda Leupp – Programs Director
Mike Searing – Nutrition Director
Bill Swallow – Nutrition Site Coordinator
Allen Underwood – Bookkeeper
Sarah Wainscott – Staff Assistant
Debbie Ambrose – Programs Assistant
Mark Woodcox – Maintenance Assistant
A staff of fifteen in-home service aides

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024 was a tremendous year for the Commission on Aging. The food program continued to grow. We added some special luncheons to bring in new guests and celebrate holidays.

Our Chore program was able to greatly expand its reach through a partnership with the Coldwater Noon Club to bring leaf raking to more seniors. In-Home Services expanded the number of clients they were serving through steady staffing. The taxes program was a big success in 2024, holding appointments two days a week with some evenings as well.

In July, we held an Open House with over 200 in attendance. In terms of health and wellness, Matter of Balance made a return in 2024 facilitated by Michigan State University Extension. The Stayin' Alive with Weights class and Step in Motion continue to be popular exercise offerings with both groups offering Zoom availability to increase their outreach.

In August, Branch County voters approved a millage renewal for operations, with 72% of voters saying yes. This allows us to continue our mission for another five years!

Overall, in 2024 we enjoyed meeting more Branch County seniors and adding to our repertoire of services, programs, and activities.

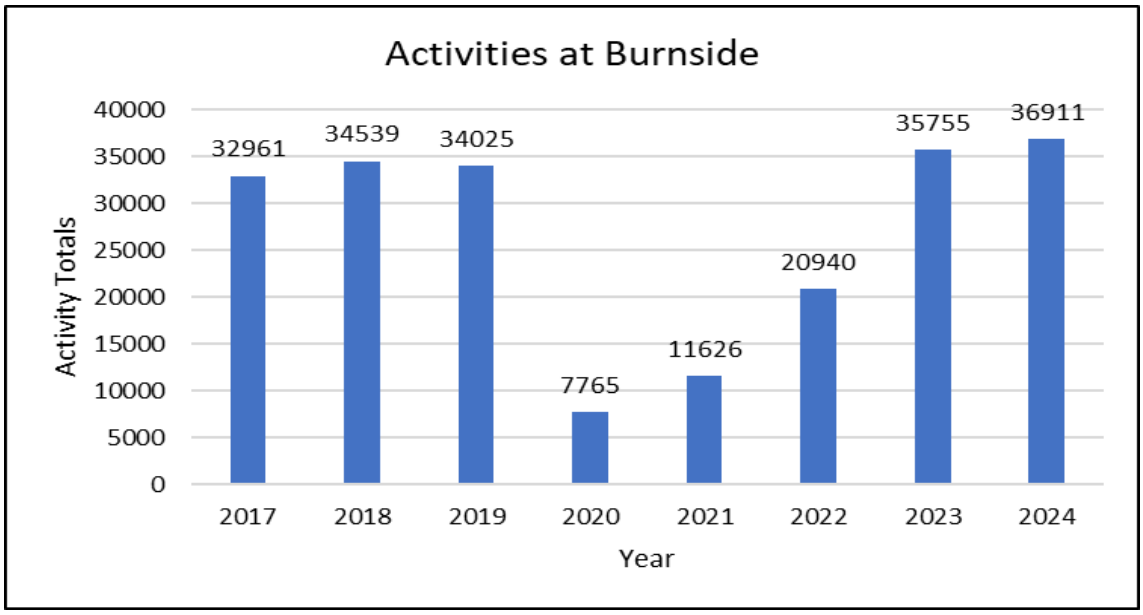
Respectfully,

Branch County Commission on Aging
Executive Director

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

The Burnside Center is well-known in the Branch County community for its many activities. In 2024, we continued to see participation in activities grow. The chart below shows that activity totals remain higher than levels seen pre-pandemic.

The Veterans Program was a highlight of 2024 with 78 people in attendance. This event is coordinated by volunteers and heavily supported by the local DAR organization. This year's speaker was Claire Kitchin Dahl who delivered her message dressed as Rosie the Riveter. Legal Services was also a highly utilized service at Burnside in 2024, with 82 different people taking advantage of this service.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Information and referral services for older adults continued in 2024, by calling the Center. The information available is a directory of housing, food assistance, medical services, prescription assistance, and transportation, as well as various other services. This information source is kept current and includes local, state, and national resources. Information and referral at the Commission on Aging is provided by volunteers at the front desk and MMAP counselors, as well as by staff.

MEDICARE/MEDICAID ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The MMAP (Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program) continues to be an asset to the COA and is appreciated by the beneficiaries who receive help. In 2024, the MMAP office was staffed by a paid site coordinator and four volunteers. MMAP is a free service to Branch County residents. Its purpose is to help primarily Medicare, but also Medicaid, beneficiaries regarding their insurance eligibility and benefits. Medicare's annual open enrollment period, October 15th through December 7th, is an important part of MMAP. The purpose of this event is to help beneficiaries understand, compare, and enroll in the Medicare Part D (prescription drug plan) or Advantage plan that best fits their needs.

The number of clients who utilize MMAP services varies from year to year, which can be influenced by state and/or federal changes to the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Client appointments can be done via phone, Zoom, and preferably in person.

KINSHIP CARE

The kinship care program is for grandparents raising grandkids and for other adults who are raising related children. This is a joint venture with the Branch Intermediate School District Early Education program and the Branch County Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

This educational support group typically meets monthly. Dinner and childcare are always provided in order to make it easier for caregivers to attend. This program is supported by state grant funds. This program averaged approximately six adults and three children at each meeting in 2024.

CHORE PROGRAM

The chore program helps seniors with occasional heavy-duty or high-energy jobs in the home, such as leaf clean-up, snow removal, and window washing. The Commission on Aging pays independent contractors to complete this work for seniors. This service is supported by federal grant funds and millage. In 2024, 151.25 hours of service were performed. This was a huge increase in service over past years, that was primarily fueled by a partnership with the Coldwater Noon Club who completed lots of hours doing fall yard clean-up for area seniors.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

One of the big draws to the Burnside Center is exercise programs. In 2024, we continued to see strong participation in our exercise classes. Burnside offers an Exercise Room to Branch County seniors, featuring easy-to-use and familiar equipment that many have used in previous physical therapy programs. Treadmills, NuSteps, stationary bikes, and a few resistance machines are available. Burnside also offers classes for those who enjoy group exercise. In 2024, Tai Chi, Stayin' Alive with Weights, and Step in Motion were available. Over 400 Branch County seniors took advantage of one of the exercise options.

MEDICAL VAN TRANSPORTATION

The medical van transportation program is a valuable service for Branch County seniors. This service is supported by grant funds, as well as millage funds and donations. COA owns a 2016 Dodge Grand Caravan and a 2022 Chrysler Pacifica for use in this program. COA also has a cooperative agreement with the Branch County VA office for use of their wheelchair ramp van if that type of transportation is needed.

The vans are driven by volunteer drivers who pick up older adults at their homes, transport them to medical appointments, and return them to their homes. A donation to COA is suggested but is not required. The vans travel outside the local area as far away as Fort Wayne, Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, Lansing, and other locations. Many seniors find it a great relief to have someone else navigate for them in larger cities they are unfamiliar with. In 2024, the vans traveled a total of 13,305 miles during 389 trips.

TAX PREPARATION

COA partners with Goodwill Industries of Central Michigan's Heartland, Inc. to provide free income tax preparation to low-income Branch County residents through a program called VITA. Goodwill provides the staff and volunteers, and they hold the grant that funds this program. Burnside Center provides the office space, including computers, and schedules the appointments. This program is able to serve all income-eligible Branch County residents; however, most of the clients who are seen at Burnside for this service are seniors. In 2024, the VITA program had three preparers and four greeters who worked with two staff members from Goodwill. 442 Branch County residents had their taxes prepared at Burnside in 2024.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT LOAN CLOSET

The Branch County Commission on Aging maintains an inventory of clean, gently used durable medical equipment, which is available on a long-term loan basis to Branch County residents who have a need for it. Types of items commonly available are walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs, commodes, toilet risers, and canes. This service is supported by millage funds, monetary donations, and donations of equipment. The Commission on Aging loaned out 210 pieces of equipment in 2024. This was a 13% increase over the previous year.

IN-HOME SERVICES

The in-home services program provides older adults the option of remaining in their own homes for a longer period of time. The housekeeping, personal care, and respite care received from one of the aides employed by the Commission assists not only the senior, but the family caregivers as well. With the respite service, aides provide primary care for older adults, which allows their caregivers an opportunity to take a break. There was an average of 185 clients per month in 2024 receiving in-home services. This is a large increase from prior years. Assistance is provided to clients with a limited number of hours per week in order to assist a larger number of Branch County seniors.

In 2024, the Commission on Aging performed 8,790.5 hours of homemaking, 825.75 hours of personal care, and 1,158 hours of respite for Branch County seniors.

VOLUNTEERS

The Commission on Aging could not accomplish its many achievements each year without the help of our dedicated crew of volunteers. COA provides the Branch County area with a constructive way to utilize the vast array of talents and skills that our older adults possess. The Commission on Aging uses volunteers for answering the phones, instructing almost all of the classes, assisting other seniors with Medicare questions, taking seniors to medical appointments, serving lunch, delivering meals to home-bound seniors, and a number of other jobs.

Our volunteer group grew in 2024 to a total of 90 people. In 2024, they provided 11,596 hours of service at a cost-savings to the COA of over $137,000.

NUTRITION

The home-delivered meals program serves home-bound seniors age 60 and over by delivering meals to them on three days per week and providing a wellness check during each visit. Each client receives three hot and two frozen meals per week. At the end of 2024, the Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program had 166 active clients in the program. Throughout the year, the nutrition program served a total of 306 clients, delivering 43,430 meals.

Shelf-stable meals are also supplied to home-delivered meals clients. These meals are designed to ensure that clients have access to nourishing food during difficult times, especially when deliveries are interrupted by severe weather. This program consists of 10 active delivery routes, manned by a devoted team of 26 volunteer drivers. In total, the volunteer drivers contributed 3,346 hours to make food deliveries.

The congregate meals program is intended to provide nourishing meals to seniors as well as social interaction to improve overall wellness. In 2024, we expanded our outreach by launching congregate meal services at the Union City Senior Center, thereby providing an additional welcoming venue for seniors to come together, enjoy wholesome meals, and foster community connections.

By the end of 2024, the congregate program had successfully welcomed 806 different guests, with a total of 11,921 meals served. This reflects not only our focus on providing sustenance, but also the team's commitment to creating a vibrant community atmosphere that encourages social interaction.

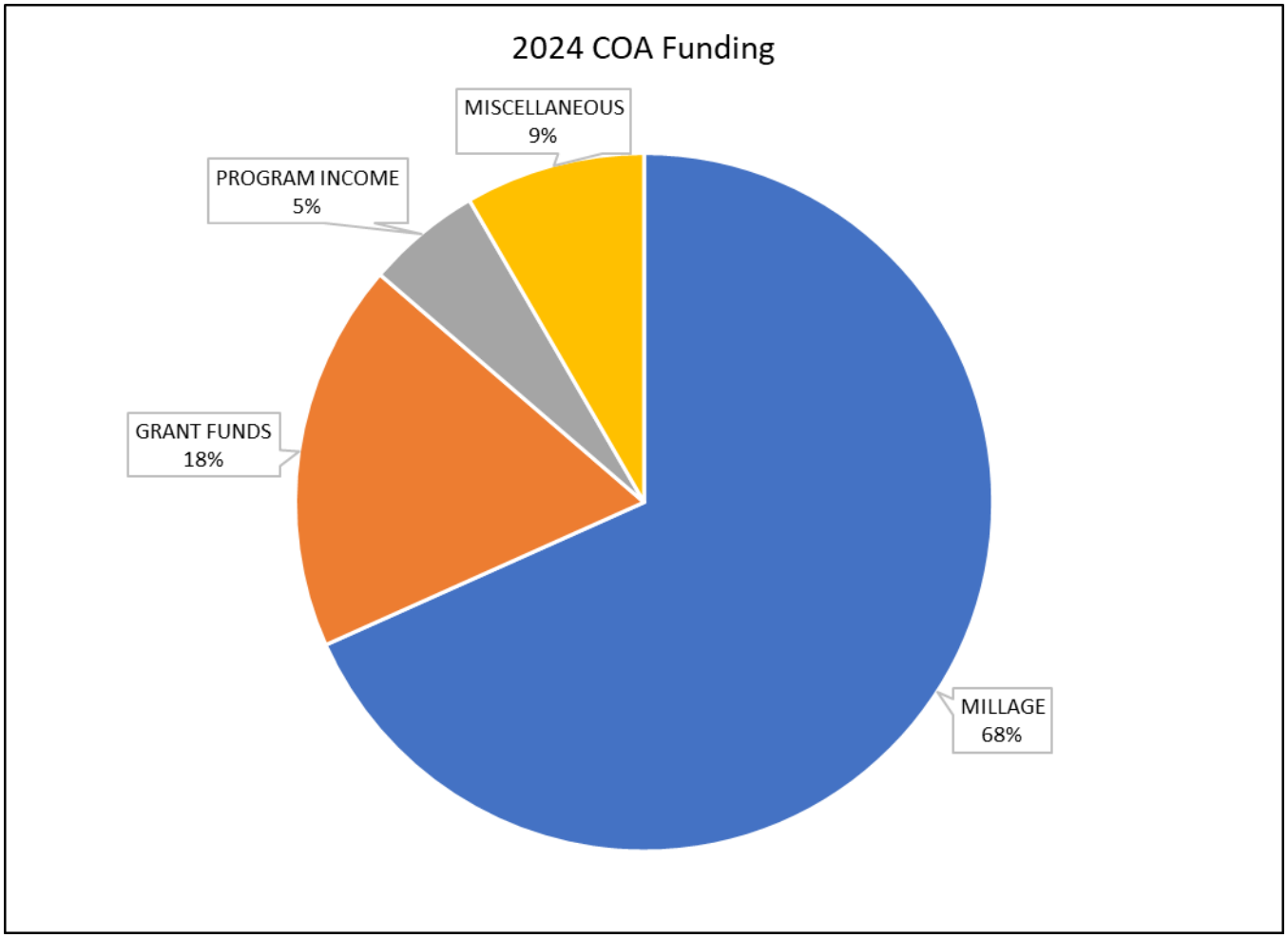
The congregate program is supported by a dedicated group of 16 volunteers who contributed 1,195 hours, enhancing the overall experience for all attendees and ensuring efficient service during meal times. A new volunteer position of hospitality coordinator was also created in 2024 to welcome new guests and help them get acclimated. Meals for both the home-delivered and congregate programs are provided through a catering contract with Milestone Senior Services in Battle Creek, MI.

In 2024, we introduced "Special Wednesdays," featuring themed menus as well as engaging entertainment. These events are meticulously organized by a team of volunteers and staff, who dedicate their time and energy to ensuring a memorable experience for everyone involved. The nutrition team prepares these dishes on-site, catering to the diverse preferences of our guests. It is a true pleasure to witness these gatherings flourish, with some events attracting over 200 senior guests, fostering a sense of community and connection among attendees.

FUNDING

The Commission on Aging is funded by a variety of means.

The majority of funding, around 68%, is comprised of millage funds. The operational millage is in place from 2025-2029 at 0.4857 mills. The building millage is in place from 2021-2030 at .2424 mills. The Commission on Aging receives several state and federal grants to support the services it offers to Branch County seniors which comprises about 18% of the funding. The COA is also graciously supported by individuals and businesses through donations.



BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Renovated in 2016/2017, the Burnside Center has over 14,000 square feet of activity and office space for the Branch County Commission on Aging. The Center is all one level with no stairs, includes wide hallways for ease of movement throughout the building, has ample handicap accessible parking, and utilizes many interior windows to highlight the activities going on throughout the building. The Center is conveniently located in Coldwater, off of N. Michigan Avenue.