

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2019



*Branch County Commission on Aging*  
*65 Grahl Drive, Coldwater, MI 49036*  
*[www.burnsidecenter.com](http://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.**

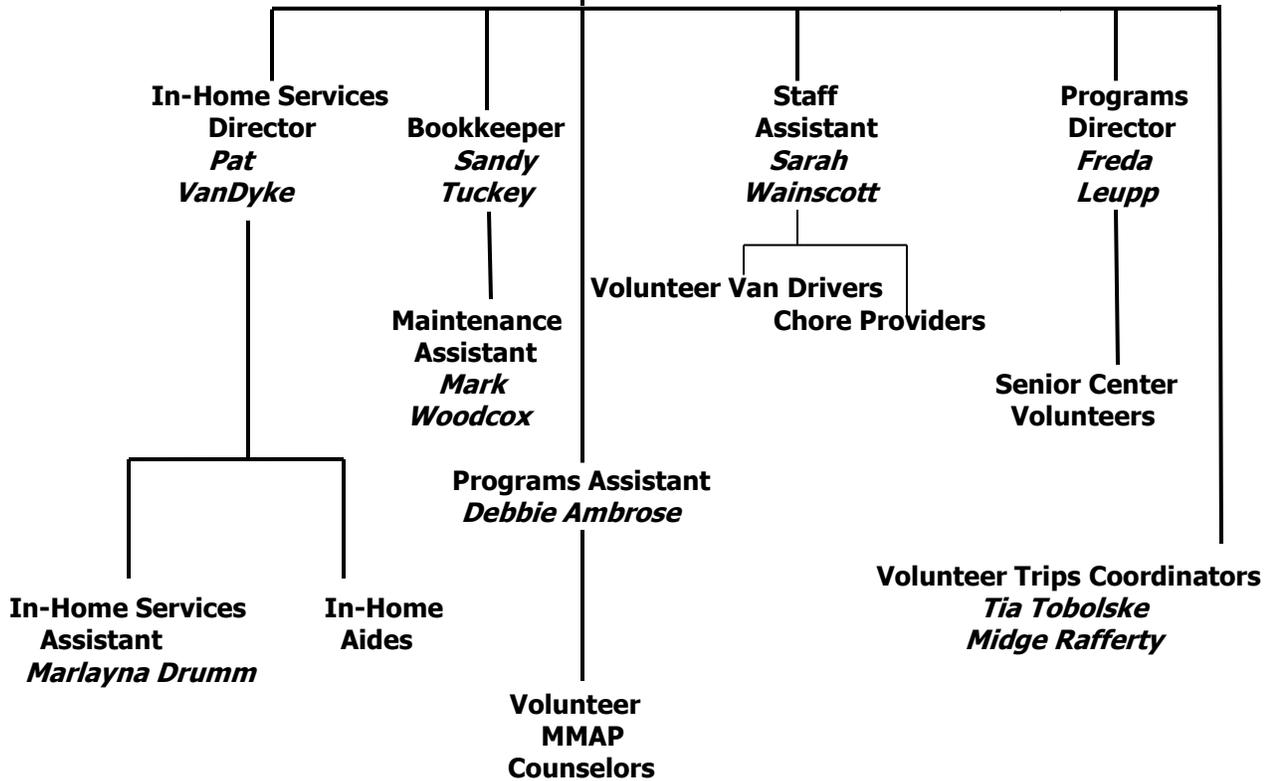
**The Commission will seek and facilitate cooperation and consensus of action through our partnerships with community agencies and governmental bodies in all areas where our missions are convergent.**

# BRANCH COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING 2019 STAFF

Branch County Board of Commissioners

Branch County Commission on Aging  
Board of Directors

Executive Director  
*Amy Duff, LMSW*



# **BRANCH COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Established by action of the Branch County Commissioners**

**Gordon Gentry – Chairman**  
**Dave Smoker – Vice Chairman**  
**Betty Kurtz – Secretary/Treasurer**  
**Jan Olney**  
**Paul Meredith**  
**Brent Wilber**  
**James Webb**

**Commissioner Ted Gordon – Liaison from Branch County Board of Commissioners**

**The Board of Directors represents the older adult population of Branch County. Monthly meetings in 2019 were held at 65 Grahl Drive, Coldwater, on the third Tuesday at 3 p.m. in the Grahl Room.**

## **2019 STAFF**

**Amy Duff, LMSW – Executive Director**  
**Pat VanDyke – In-Home Services Director**  
**Marlayna Drumm – Assistant In-Home Services Director**  
**Freda Leupp – Programs Director**  
**Sandy Tuckey – Bookkeeper**  
**Sarah Wainscott – Staff Assistant**  
**Debbie Ambrose – Programs Assistant**  
**Tia Tobolske & Midge Rafferty – Volunteer Trips Coordinators**  
**Mark Woodcox – Maintenance Assistant**  
**A staff of eighteen in-home service aides**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, the Branch County Commission on Aging (COA) expanded its programs and its staff!

In January, we ushered in a new partnership with Goodwill Industries of America's Heartland to provide free tax preparation services at the Center through the VITA program. Two trained and certified tax preparers and three greeters worked two days per week during the tax season to help as many Branch County residents as possible. The program was a success and we look forward to expanding it in 2020.

In April, we hired a pair of ladies to work as volunteers in our trips department. They spent the year planning trips and getting to know the senior community. Also in April, we hired a maintenance assistant. This is a newly created position to help us better maintain our newly renovated facility.

As you read through this report, you'll see an increase in many of our activities and programs but none stands out more than one of our newly created exercise programs. "Stayin' Alive with Weights" was an idea that generated from some of our regular exercisers at Burnside. They had been enjoying our movement classes but felt that strengthening was needed. They requested a small amount of equipment to get things started. This program immediately outgrew the room it was scheduled in and now takes up our entire dining room. We are excited to have so many new seniors staying healthy with us.

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Amy Duff, MSW. The signature is written in black ink and includes the initials "MSW" at the end.

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 2019, over 3,100 different seniors took advantage of the many activities, programs, and services held at the Burnside Center. Seniors enjoyed various card games, billiards, wood carving, and Wii bowling. Classes were available on a variety of things like stained glass, computers, and guitar. There were an abundance of craft opportunities including quilting, watercolor painting, knitting, and more. In June, we held a brand new special event called A Better Ending, where seniors could learn about end-of-life planning. And in December, we held one of our largest ever Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale events. You can find a complete listing of activities in the Burnside Buzz newsletter or on our website, [www.burnsidecenter.com](http://www.burnsidecenter.com).



# PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

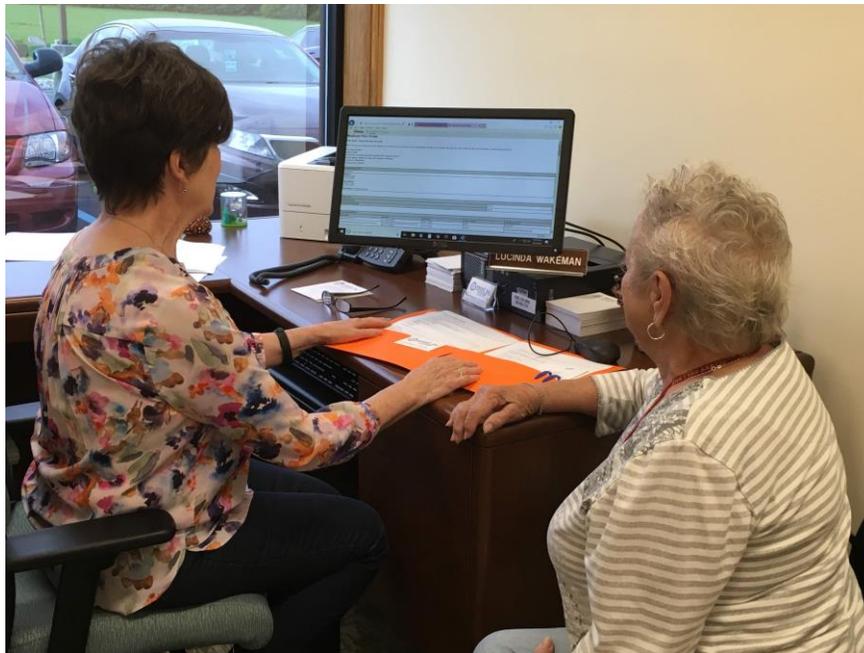
## INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Information and referral services for older adults can be obtained 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) office continues to thrive. In 2019, the MMAP office was staffed by a part-time paid coordinator and four part-time volunteer counselors. The coordinator and counselors offer free appointments to Branch County residents to help them with any challenges or concerns they may have regarding Medicare and Medicaid eligibility and services. This includes help navigating the ever-changing rules and regulations and help comparing the confusing Medicare Part D prescription plans annually.

In 2019, 717 client contacts were recorded. The number of clients accessing MMAP services varies from year to year—often influenced by what is going on in terms of state and/or federal changes to Medicare, Medicaid, and the insurance system in general.



## 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 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 2019, the vans traveled a total of 17,485 miles during 368 trips.

### HEALTH AND FITNESS

In keeping with the increased national and state focus on health promotion and disease prevention for older adults, COA provides many health-related activities at the Center. Those include: free blood pressure checks, free blood sugar testing, stress reduction massage therapy, foot clinics, hearing screenings, and more. In 2019, ProMedica Coldwater Regional Hospital continued providing free blood sugar and blood pressure checks at Burnside twice a month. The service has been very popular.

Many older adults participate daily in the exercise room by using the treadmills, exercise bikes, NuSteps, and a variety of other equipment to stay healthy. Interest in physical activity and use of the exercise room is one of the major draws to Burnside. The chart below shows the trending increase in use of the exercise room.



The Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program, which is a partnership with the Dr. Robert W. Browne Aquatic Center in Coldwater, continued to grow in popularity throughout 2019. The Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program is a warm water exercise program designed to reduce pain and improve overall health. Exercises include range of motion, muscle strengthening,

socialization, and a moderate aerobic component. In 2019, there were 1,537 instances of participation in the aquatic class.

Also seeing a large increase in participation in 2019 was our Zumba Gold class. Part way through 2019, this class was re-named to "Step in Motion, Feel the Beat". There were 689 instances of participation in this class.

In 2019, we also started a new exercise class called "Stayin' Alive with Weights." This class ballooned in popularity almost immediately and recorded 620 instances of participation in its very first year.



## TRAVEL/TRIPS

In 2019, our trips program came under new leadership. We recruited two ladies to run the program in April. They plan a variety of trips ranging from single-day trips within Michigan to week-long out-of-state trips. This variety helps us include seniors from different financial backgrounds. This program is self-sufficient—no grant or millage dollars are used for it. In November, the trips department went to Cornwell’s Dinner Theatre and in December they went to the Michigan International Speedway to see the Christmas Lights. Many trips have been planned for 2020.



### 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 was held monthly, typically on the second Tuesday of every month. Dinner and child care are always provided in order to make it easier for caregivers to attend. This program is supported by state grant funds. Some meetings feature a speaker on a topic of interest, and other meetings offer time for caregivers to network and support each other. In 2019, this group averaged 14 adults and 13 children attending each meeting.

### CHORE PROGRAM

The chore program helps seniors with occasional heavy-duty or high-energy jobs in the home such as leaf raking, snow shoveling, window washing, cleaning of attic or garage, etc. The Commission on Aging pays independent contractors to complete this work for seniors. This service is supported by federal grant funds and millage. In 2019, 205.75 hours of service were performed.

### 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 grant and millage funds, monetary donations, and donations of equipment. The Commission on Aging loaned out 112 pieces of equipment in 2019.

## **FUNDING**

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

The majority of funding, around 80%, is comprised of millage funds. The operational millage is in place from 2020-2024 at .4908 mills. The building millage is in place from 2011-2020 at .25 mills. The Commission on Aging receives several state and federal grants to support the services it offers to Branch County seniors. The COA is also graciously supported by individuals and businesses through donations.

## IN-HOME SERVICES

In-home services is the Commission on Aging's most well-known and far-reaching service. In-home services 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 18 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 156 clients per month in 2019 receiving in-home services.

In 2019, we expanded our friendly reassurance program. In this program, we target clients who are in need of extra socialization and support due to changes in recent life circumstances such as the death of a spouse, death of an adult child, a recent nursing home stay, a life-altering medical diagnosis, or other reasons. This grant-funded program allows the in-home services director or the assistant to make a special visit to the client and provide them with some comfort items such as lap blankets. The program aims to purchase the comfort items from the Burnside Center craft sale or gift shop whenever possible. In 2019, 18 friendly reassurance client visits were made.

Assistance is provided to clients with a limited number of hours per week in order to assist a larger number of Branch County clients. In 2019, the Commission on Aging performed 9,019.50 hours of homemaking, 596.75 hours of personal care, and 2,074 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, and a number of other jobs.

During 2019, 58 volunteers completed 7,519.77 hours of volunteer work. This saved the Commission on Aging \$88,730.89 in labor costs.



## 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.





