ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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.

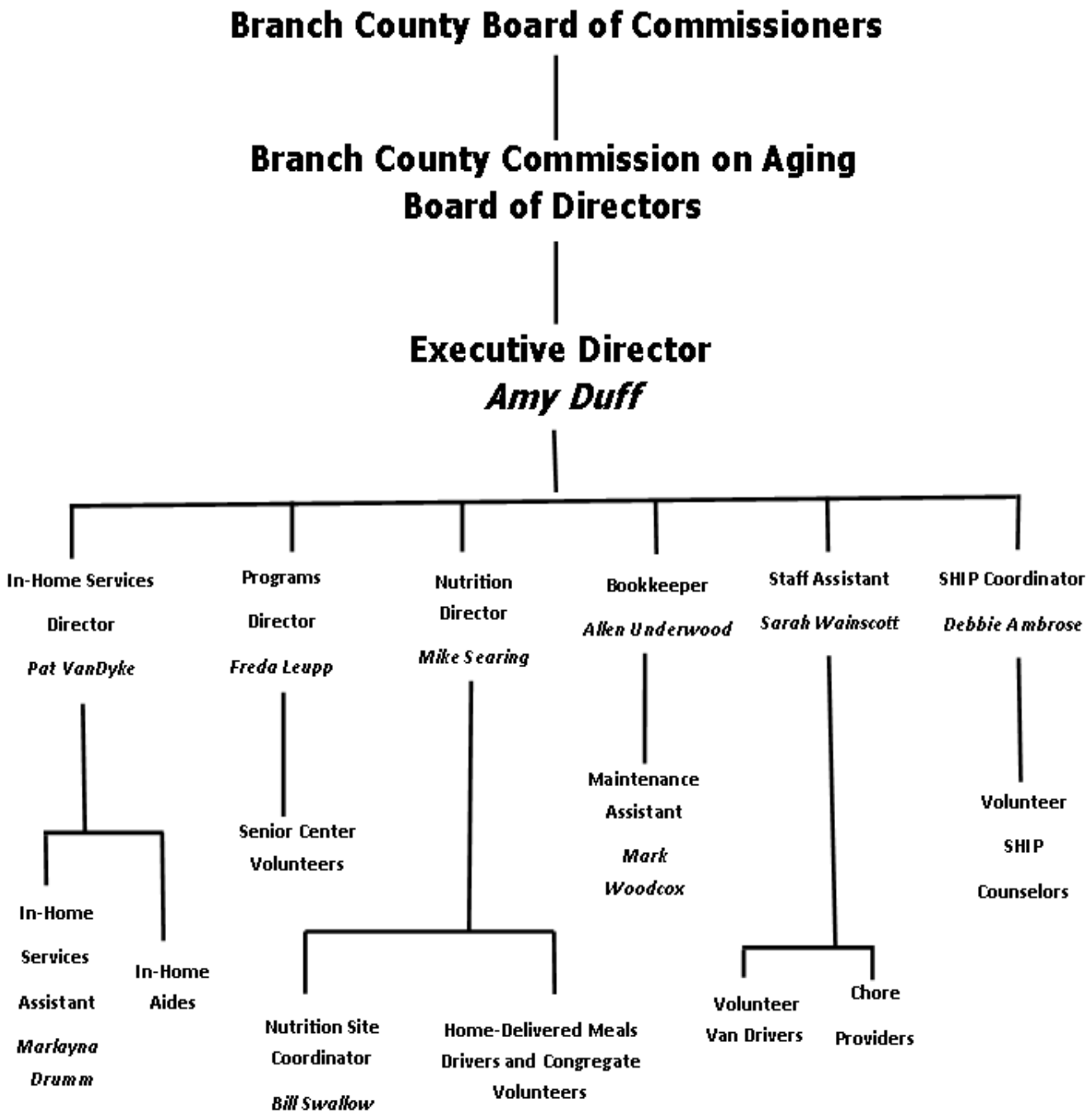
The Commission will partner with other agencies to maintain a presence throughout the county.

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
2025 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 2025 were held at 65 Grahl Drive, Coldwater on the third Tuesday at 2:00 p.m.

2025 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 seventeen in-home service aides

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 was a great year for the Commission on Aging with steady and increasing services, programs, and activities.

In March, we began a new partnership with Hampton Aquatics to reintroduce the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program with a new instructor. CBPU brought a very educational program to Burnside in April about streaming TV options. We hosted an event in August called A Better Ending to help families learn about options relating to handling the death of a loved one. And in November, we hosted the state agency that oversees services for older adults, the ACLS Bureau, for a community input session.

Throughout 2025, our In-Home Services department transitioned to MobileTrak, a smartphone-based software for organizing schedules and documenting service visits for our aides and their clients. A highlight for the in-home services department was seeing another year of growth in the number of clients being cared for. Steady staffing has allowed us to keep growing!

Our Special Monthly Luncheons drew huge crowds in 2025! Our most popular ones were Country Western Wednesday in January and the 50's Sock Hop in May. Both events had extensive decorating, musical entertainment, and a delicious themed meal. Over 200 people attended the Country Western luncheon and over 175 attended the Sock Hop.

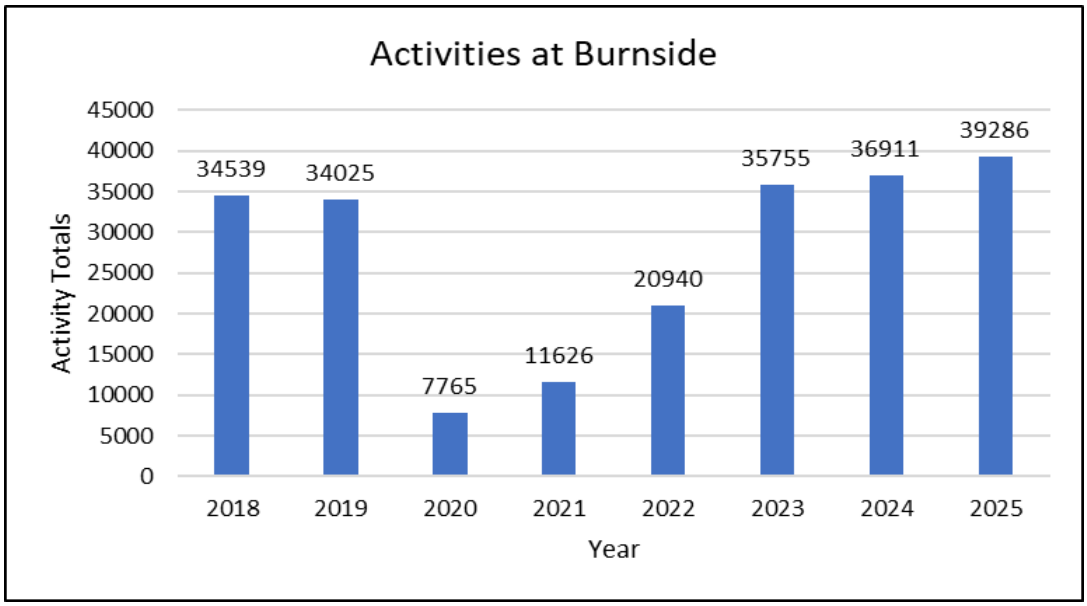
Overall, in 2025 we enjoyed meeting more Branch County seniors and adding to our repertoire of services, programs, and activities.

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 2025, we continued to see participation in activities grow. The chart below shows that activity totals remained higher than levels seen pre-pandemic.



The state agency that oversees programming for older adults, the ACLS Bureau, held a Community Conversation in November at Burnside. Several local older adults, community members, and service providers from neighboring counties attended to provide input to the State as it started the process of writing its next plan. It was an honor for Branch County to host the State for one of these sessions.

A big highlight of the year was the return of a unique and helpful event called A Better Ending in August. The concept for this event came from our Programs Director. The idea behind A Better Ending was that people often avoid discussions on death and planning for things related to death, and this can make the whole event even more overwhelming than it already is. This event had 14 vendors participating and nearly 100 seniors in attendance. Some of the breakout sessions included pre-planning funerals, organ donation, and how to handle electronic accounts after the death of a loved one.

In April of 2025, we hosted a presentation by CBPU to educate seniors on how streaming television works and how to make good choices in terms of using this service. This seminar was timely as Burnside was losing their cable TV service and needed to switch to streaming, along with many community members. CBPU brought several staff members and nearly 100 patrons came to listen!

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Information and referral services for older adults continued in 2025, 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 staff, volunteers at the front desk, and SHIP counselors. Community members can access resources anytime at the Resource Wall or by checking the resources tab on our website.

STATE HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

In 2025, the State of Michigan chose to make a change to the Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP). They chose to end the contract with MMAP, Inc and instead run this program in-house at the state agency. With this came a name change from MMAP to SHIP, State Health Insurance Assistance Program. So, in 2025 we experienced some changes as a result of this transition but the services that Branch County seniors have come to expect at Burnside continued.

In 2025, the SHIP office was staffed by a paid site coordinator and four volunteers. SHIP 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 SHIP. 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.

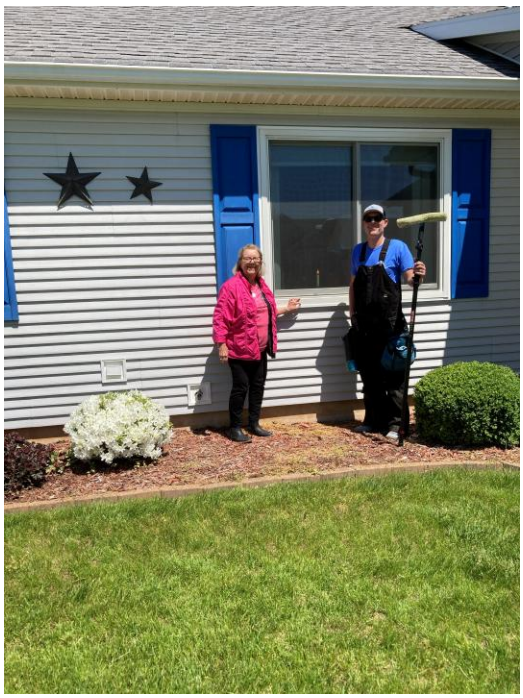
The number of clients who utilize SHIP services varies from year to year, which can be influenced by state and/or federal changes to the Medicare and Medicaid programs. Client appointments can be done via phone, Zoom, and preferably in person.

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 federal grant funds. This program averaged approximately six adults and three children at each meeting in 2025.



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 2025, 115.5 hours of service were performed. The Coldwater Noon Club continued their volunteer partnership with COA completing eight fall yard cleanups.

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 2025, the VITA program had three preparers and four greeters who worked with two staff members from Goodwill. 438 Branch County residents had their taxes prepared at Burnside in 2025.

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 were 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 2025, the vans traveled a total of 11,977 miles during 310 trips.

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 173 pieces of equipment in 2025.

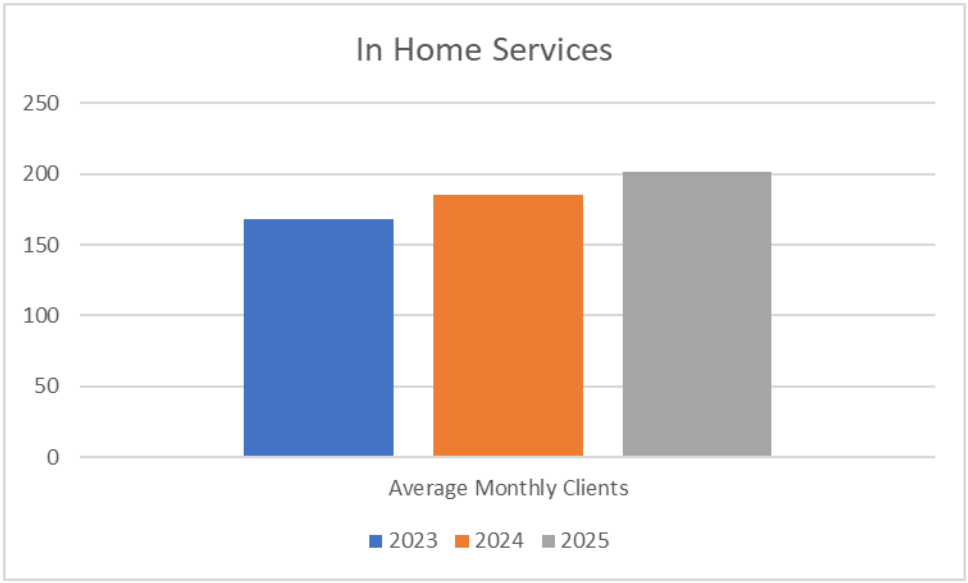
HEALTH AND FITNESS

One of the big draws to the Burnside Center is exercise programs. In 2025, 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 2025, Tai Chi, Stayin' Alive with Weights, Chair Yoga, and Step in Motion were available. Over 400 Branch County seniors took advantage of one of the exercise options.

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 homemaking, 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 over 201 clients per month in 2025 receiving in-home services. The chart below shows the increase in the number of clients receiving services over the past three 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 2025, the Commission on Aging performed 9,840.25 hours of homemaking, 645.75 hours of personal care, and 1,980 hours of respite for Branch County seniors. Also in 2025, the In-Home Services department implemented MobleTrak which is a smartphone-based program that allows the aide to have their schedule on their work-issued phone and to have clients sign acknowledgement of the services provided on the work phone. This data can be uploaded into the software for data management and reporting. This has streamlined scheduling and saved on paper and administrative time.



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.

In 2025 we had 109 seniors that worked for the COA as volunteers. They provided 11,631 hours of service at a cost-savings to the COA of nearly $200,000.

NUTRITION

HOME DELIVERED MEALS

The Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program had a successful 2025 delivery distribution. This initiative remained a critical resource for homebound Branch County seniors aged 60 and over, providing three weekly deliveries that include three hot meals, two frozen meals, and a vital wellness check during each visit.

The year-end data for 2025 shows the program concluded the year with 155 active clients. Throughout the full calendar year, the nutrition program successfully served a total of 312 individual homebound clients and delivered 40,121 meals across Branch County. The Home Delivered Meals program consisted of 10 active daily routes throughout the county. Deliveries were made by over 34 local volunteer drivers. In total, the volunteer drivers contributed 3,345 hours on the road.

Shelf-Stable meals were provided to all home delivered meals clients. These meals are designed to ensure that all clients have access to nourishing food during difficult times, especially when deliveries are interrupted by severe weather, and have no other food source. All shelf-stable meals are designed and prepared in-house.

In 2025, the fresh produce program began in conjunction with home delivered meals deliveries. All clients received extra fresh produce monthly to promote living a healthy lifestyle. In 2025, Coldwater Noon Club provided funding for this program.

CONGREGATE DINING

The congregate meals program is designed to provide nourishing meals and social interaction to improve the overall wellness of seniors. Currently, the Branch County Commission on Aging provides meals at both the Burnside Center and the Union City Senior Center three days per week.

By the end of 2025, the program successfully welcomed 1,011 individual senior guests and served a total of 13,487 meals between the two sites. This success is supported by a dedicated group of 37 volunteers who contributed 1,381 hours to ensure an enjoyable dining experience for our clients. Meals for both the home delivered and congregate programs were provided through a catering contract with Milestone Senior Services in Battle Creek, Michigan.

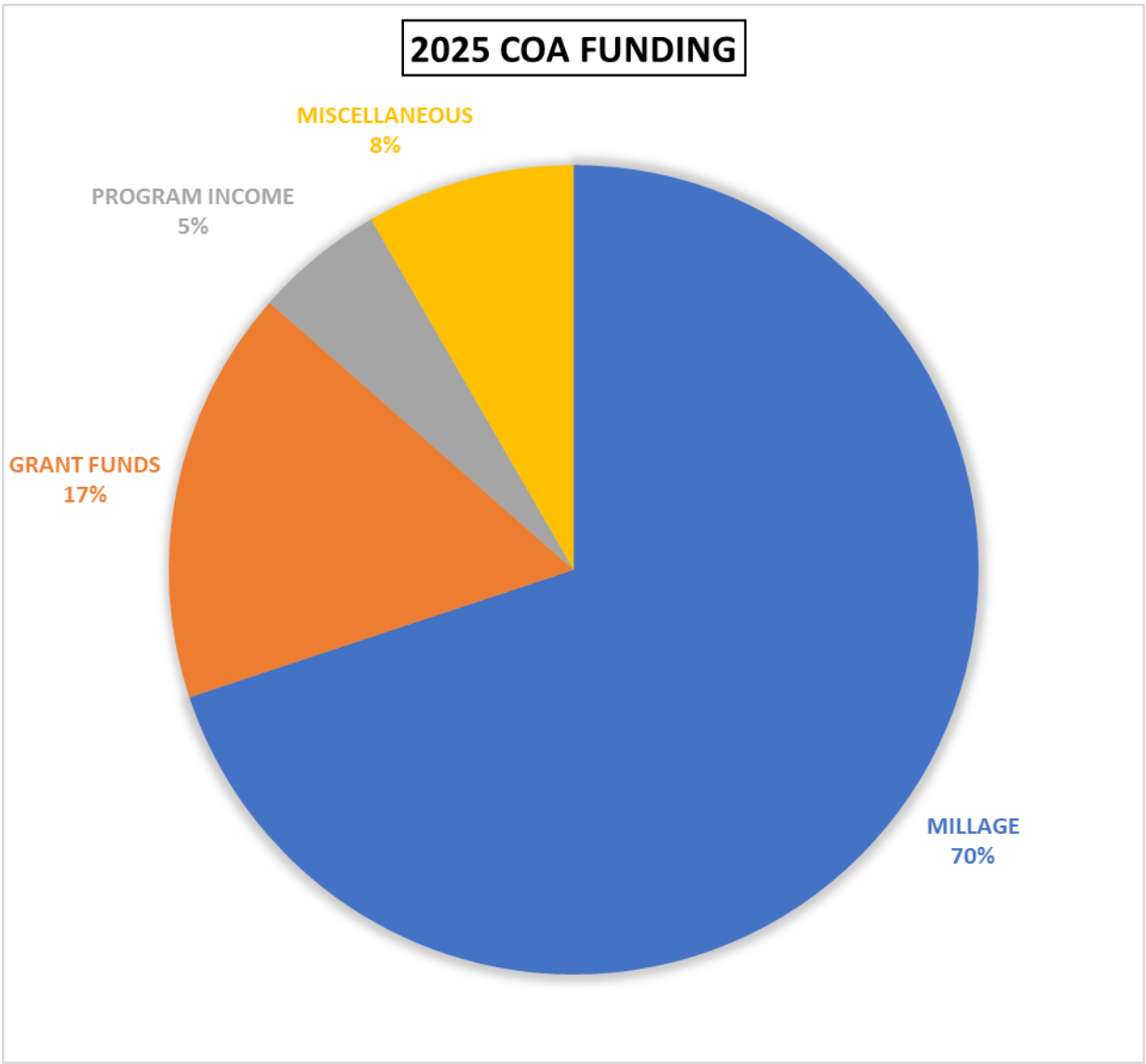
In 2025, the "Special Wednesdays" continued to hit record numbers of guests attending as new and exciting entertainment and activities were introduced. These events feature themed menus as well as engaging entertainment from local artists. Each event is planned and organized by a special team of volunteers that dedicate their time to make a memorable experience for our guests.

Mel's
Diner
BIG BOY
5¢

FUNDING

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

The majority of funding, around 70%, is comprised of millage funds. The operational millage is in place from 2025-2029 at 0.4811 mills. The building millage is in place from 2021-2030 at .2376 mills. The Commission on Aging receives several state and federal grants to support the services it offers to Branch County seniors which comprises about 17% 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.

In 2025, the City of Coldwater installed a walking path on Grahl Drive to provide local seniors with a safe way to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

Burnside
WORK BENCH
Computer Techs
Only

CLUB

Your Heart, Your Future
Small daily changes can add years to life
You're never too old to improve your heart health
Let's take care of the heart that takes care of you