



engAGED  
The National Resource Center  
for Engaging Older Adults

# 2024 National Summit to Increase Social Connections



May 14-15, 2024

# Welcome and Purpose Setting

- Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- Meredith Hanley, Director, Community Capacity Building, USAging

# Summit Housekeeping

## Recording and Slides

- The recording and slides from both days of the Summit will be shared following the event on our website: [www.committtoconnect.org](http://www.committtoconnect.org)

## Audio Options

- Use your computer speakers, **OR** dial in using the phone number in your registration email.

## Questions and Answers (Q&A)

- You can submit questions for the speakers at any time during this presentation. On the Zoom module on the bottom of your screen, click the Q&A icon, type your question in the box and submit.

## Chat Feature

- The Chat feature allows webinar attendees, the host, co-hosts and panelists to communicate for the duration of the webinar.

# Accessibility and Support

## **ASL/CART Services**

- ASL/CART services will be provided for this event. A video stream of an ASL interpreter will be pinned on the screen so all attendees can view the interpreter.
- To access CART live transcription of the event, click on the CC Live Transcript button in the control bar at the bottom of the Zoom window.

## **Technical Assistance**

- To get our attention if you need tech assistance: Raise or Lower Hand: Alt + Y

## **Screen Reader Users: Reduce unwanted chatter**

- Request speech on demand: Insert, Spacebar, "S"

# **Program Spotlight: Machine Learning and the Social Health Connector Tool**

# Program Spotlight: Machine Learning and the Social Health Connector Tool

- Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, ACL (Moderator)
- Sara Link, Director of No Wrong Door, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
- Erika Okonsky, No Wrong Door Expansion Specialist, DARS
- Kathy Spangler, Director of 211 Virginia, Virginia Department of Social Services
- Mary Miller, Director of 211 Data Projects, United Way Worldwide
- Catherine MacDonald, Director of Community Engagement and Outreach, Virginia Commonwealth University



# National Summit to Increase Social Connections

Day 2: May 15, 2024

## Machine Learning and the Social Health Connector Tool

# Agenda

- ★ *Research to Combat Social Isolation*
- ★ *A No Wrong Door to Social Connection*
- ★ *Audrey's Path to Finding Social Engagement*
- ★ *211's Resources*
- ★ *Replicability of the Model*





# Catherine MacDonald

Director of Community Engagement and Outreach, Virginia  
Commonwealth University



[EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov](https://EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov)





# **Social Connectedness:** **a Powerful** **Health Practice**

- **Helps prevent disease and illness**
- **Increases longevity**
- **Improves cognitive strength**
- **Much of our happiness comes from relationships**



## Holt-Lunstad's Social Connection Typology

The extent to which an individual is socially connected depends on multiple factors, including:

1. Connections to others via the existence of relationships and their roles
2. A sense of connection that results from actual or perceived support or inclusion
3. The sense of connection to others that is based on positive and negative qualities

<i><b>Structural</b></i>	<i><b>Functional</b></i>	<i><b>Quality</b></i>
<p>The existence of and interconnections among different social relationships and roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* marital status</li><li>* social networks</li><li>* social integration</li><li>* living alone</li><li>* social isolation</li></ul>	<p>Functions provided by or perceived to be available because of social relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* received support</li><li>* perceptions of social support</li><li>* perceived loneliness</li></ul>	<p>The positive and negative aspects of social relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* marital quality</li><li>* relationship strain</li><li>* social inclusion or exclusion</li></ul>



# How positive social supports work to improve our health

## **ACCESS**

From picking up prescriptions to transporting to appointments

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**

Positive reinforcement when we need it and when we don't.

## **BUFFERING**

Protection and relief from stress.

## **PEER HEALTH BEHAVIORS**

Healthy social patterns: food, activity, self-care.

## **ADVOCACY**

Intervening, navigating, and representing our best interests

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Positive peer pressure to follow up, comply, monitor

## **PERSONALIZED INFORMATION**

Customized ideas, connections, resources about our lives and situations, on-demand.



# Housing Instability & Social Connections

The population of older adults experiencing homelessness will nearly triple over the next decade.

Evidence points to social connectedness/social isolation being a key part of this trend.

Together, VCU Gerontology students and Homeward selected and administered the De Jong Loneliness Scale among older adults during an annual Point in Time Count. Among single adults (age 51+) experiencing homelessness in our region

- 66.7% do not have enough people they feel close to;
- 82.2% do not have many people they can trust;
- 70.8% do not have plenty of people they can rely on when they have a problem.



*The Gerontologist*  
cite as: *Gerontologist*, 2019, Vol. 59, No. 2, 251-259  
doi:10.1093/geront/gnx212  
Advance Access publication January 29, 2018

OXFORD

Research Article

## Homeless for the First Time in Later Life: Uncovering More Than One Pathway

Victoria F. Burns, PhD<sup>1,\*</sup> and Tamara Sussman, PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. <sup>2</sup>School of Social Work, McGill University, Montreal, Québec, Canada.

# **Social Connectedness:** **a key determinant of health**

Social Connection is an important part of health and happiness!





# Sara Link

Director of No Wrong Door,  
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

# Erika Okonsky

No Wrong Door Expansion Specialist,  
Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services



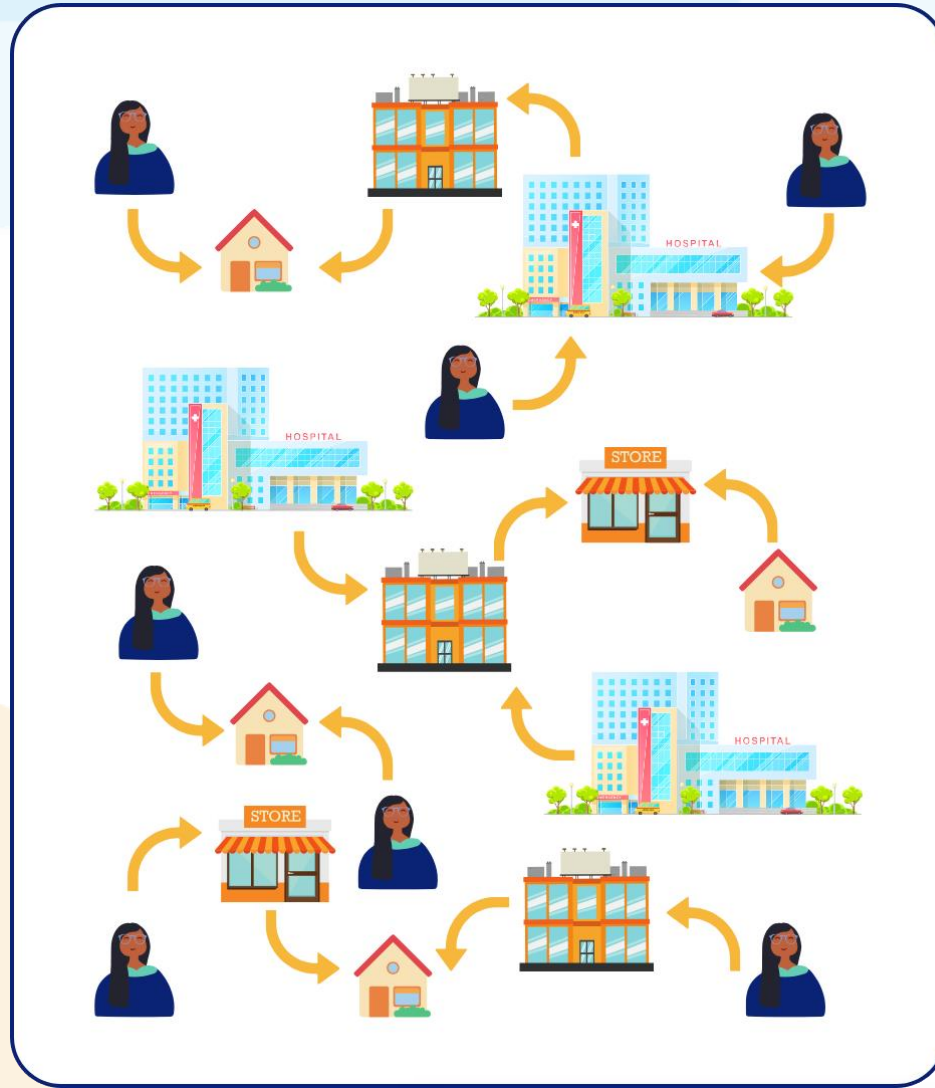
[EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov](https://EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov)

# Navigating access to resources and supports.

A place to start your  
journey for social health.



# Without No Wrong Door



# With No Wrong Door



# Journey Partners



- No Wrong Door infrastructure
- LTSS network
- Community-based interventions
- Person-centered principles
- Usability testing



- Applied research
- Question validation
- Community-based interventions
- Usability testing



- Resource database of 18,000+ listings
- Online chat
- 24/7 Phone support



- API via United Way Worldwide's National data platform.



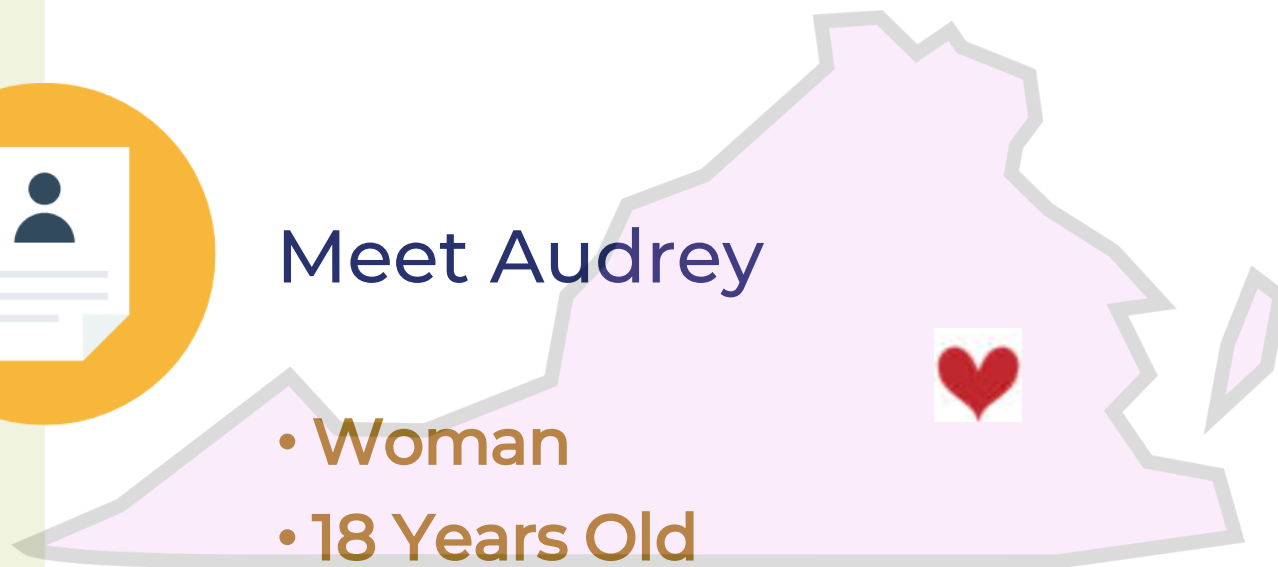
What sparks  
joy for you?





## Meet Audrey

- Woman
- 18 Years Old
- Developmental Disability
- Single, No Children
- High School Graduate



## SAYS



- I want to meet more people
- I want to live independently
- I want a job

## THINKS

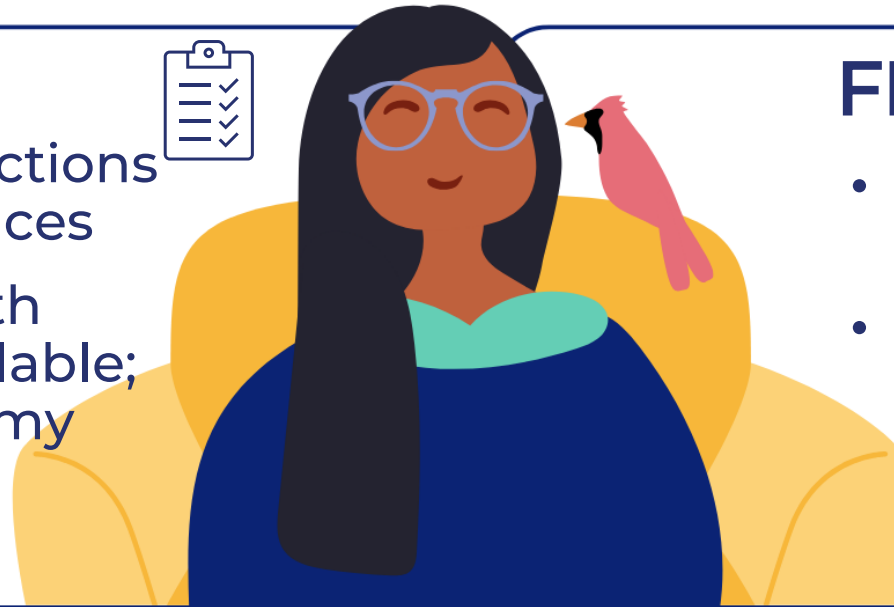


- Where do I start?
- Am I eligible for services?
- Are there resources to help me pay for all of this?

## DOES



- Use existing connections to try and find services
- Has had to fit in with what I know is available; not customized to my goals



## FEELS



- Lonely, bored and isolated
- Dismissed when no one has what I want

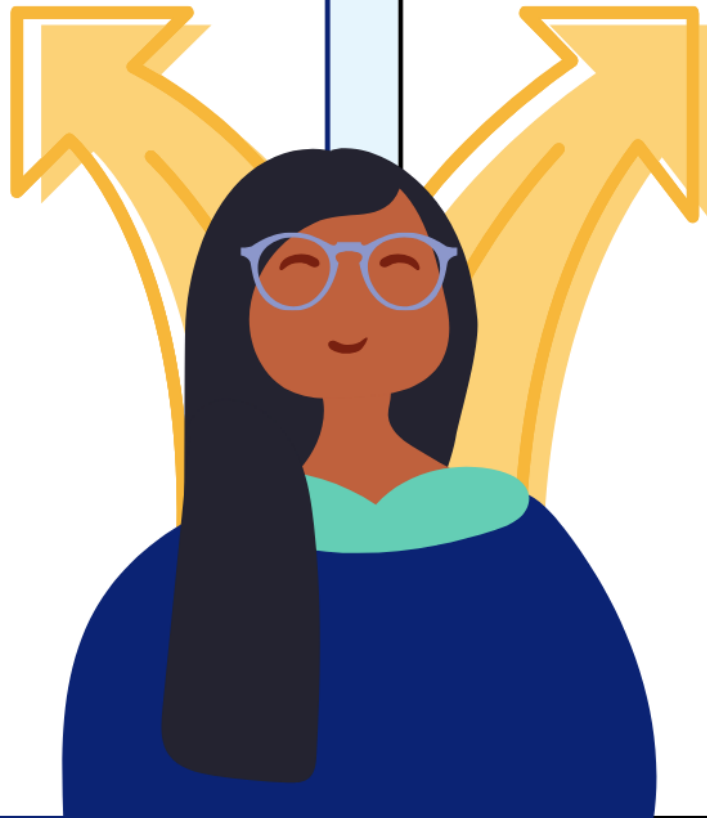


## SUPPORTED

- Audrey's person-centered options counselor at her Center for Independent Living connects her via NWD technology to other community base organizations.
- During follow-up visits Audrey explores available services to support her with her goal of living independently.

## SELF-DIRECTED

- Audrey uses tools available on **Virginia Easy Access** to find information and resources to help her achieve her goals...





Service Finder



888-992-0959

Search...



Sign  
In

Create a  
Profile

Forgot  
Password

Email\*

Password

Sign In

Success Stories

What's New

Focus Areas

# SOCIAL HEALTH CONNECTOR

Understand the  
importance of social  
connection and create  
a plan to improve your  
own social health.

START YOUR JOURNEY



LIVE CHAT

2.1.1

# Social Health Connector



You Are Not Alone



Let's Begin



About Your Connections



About You



Done

- I am filling this survey out on behalf of myself / someone else
- ...

- Tell us some activities you enjoy doing
- ...

- Do you have someone to call when you need help?
- Does anyone live with you?
- ...

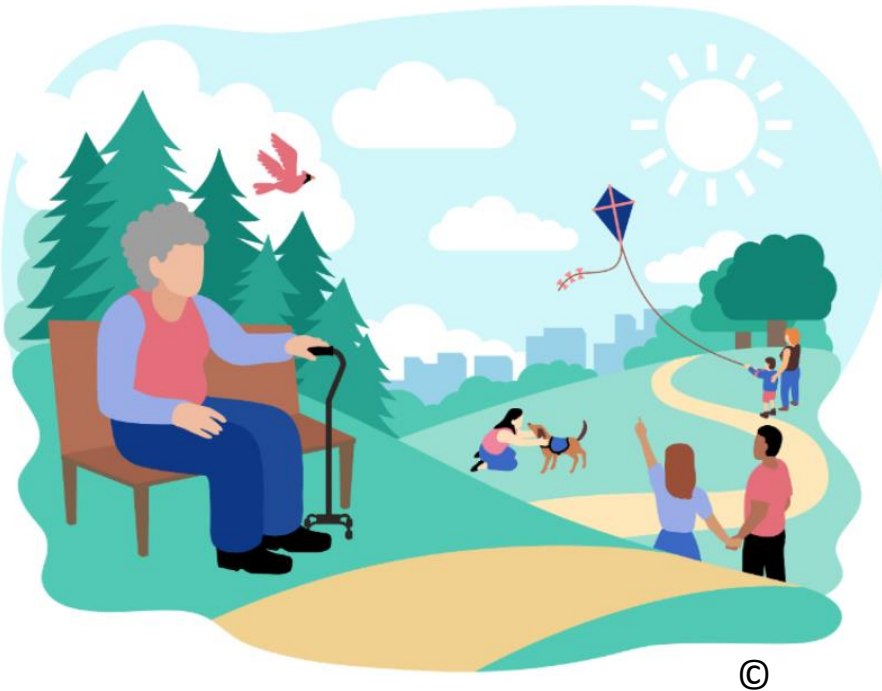
- What is your age?
- Are you a veteran?
- ...

*Multiple-select and Open-ended questions allowing freeform responses*



# Audrey answers a series of questions

Graphics support the user experience while stepping though the questionnaire.



## Thinking about things you enjoy:

- What are some activities you enjoy doing?
- Are there things that keep you from doing the things that you enjoy?
- What are some new things you would like to start doing?
- What are things you would like to stop doing?
- What makes you feel relaxed?





# Audrey shares more about her connections



## Considering your relationships:

- Do you have someone to call when you need help?
- Think about the people you are closest to. Do you feel supported by them?
- Do any of the following make it harder to socialize with others?

- Do you provide care to someone that needs help with everyday tasks?
- Does anyone live with you?
- When you think about your closest relationships, do you feel safe?
- Have you been impacted by any of these life events in the last year?
- Are you currently employed or volunteering outside of your home?



# MY SOCIAL CONNECTION PLAN

## HERE ARE SOME ANSWERS YOU'LL FIND IN THIS PLAN:

1. What is social connection and why does it matter?
2. What are my unique considerations?
3. Where can I find help near me? (Virginia Residents Only)
4. Where can I find further information?

## WHAT IS SOCIAL CONNECTION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

What do you think is the greatest predictor of happiness in life? Is it money? Perfect health? A fabulous appearance? Actually, **researchers have found that the greatest predictor of happiness is the quality of our relationships.** Good relationships help us celebrate good times and get through tough times. They even impact our physical health.

While all of us need at least some high-quality relationships to thrive, social wellbeing does NOT mean you need to have lots of friends or hobbies. Instead, social health is about the quality of the relationships you do have, not the quantity. What do you think YOUR needs are? Let's look at the things in your life that are affecting your social connection.



## WHAT ARE MY UNIQUE CONSIDERATIONS?

As with our physical health, many different factors play a role in telling the complete story of your social health. Your responses to the survey can help predict whether you are at risk of social isolation and loneliness.



### SUPPORTING WELLBEING

*These responses have been shown to decrease your likelihood of social isolation or loneliness. Try to maintain and grow these social safety nets.*

- Well done! Completing this survey and reviewing this Plan are positive steps toward your wellbeing.
- You have someone to call when you need help.
- Your employment or volunteering may provide a convenient location and routine to interact with other people.

These responses have been shown to decrease your likelihood of social isolation or loneliness. Try to maintain and grow these social safety nets.



### FOR CONSIDERATION

*Research has found mixed results on the impact of some of your responses. It will depend on how you experience them.*

- While caring for someone who needs help with everyday tasks may provide social time and a sense of purpose, it can also make it harder for you to find time or energy to socialize with others.
- While living alone does not necessarily mean you are lonely, it may lead to isolation if you do not have social connections outside your home.

Research has found mixed results on the impact of some of your responses. It will depend on how you experience them.

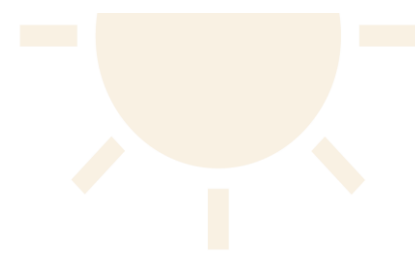


### HANDLE WITH CARE

*You may need additional support to deal with responses that have been shown to increase social isolation and loneliness*

- You said that there are things that keep you from doing things you enjoy.
- There is at least one barrier in your life that makes it harder for you to socialize with others.
- In case you feel that you could benefit from additional support, or would like to talk to someone, please consider these help lines: <https://easyaccess.virginia.gov/helplines-hotlines>
- You have experienced a major life event in the last year. Don't forget to ask for help when you need it and refuel with the people you care about!

You may need additional support to deal with responses that have been shown to increase social isolation and loneliness.



## WHERE CAN I FIND HELP NEAR ME?

Your responses have highlighted some services that may help you take care of yourself and grow your social connection. If you're 60 or older or disabled, you may start with a call to your nearest No Wrong Door office. They can continue to point you in the right direction for a variety of needs with the most local results.

### SERVICES:

Provided by No Wrong Door Virginia and 211



2-1-1

#### INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING (100%) INDEPENDENCE CENTER OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, INC. - (ECNV)

📍 1550 Crystal Dr, Suite 810, Arlington, VA 22202  
📞 (703) 324-7948  
🌐 <https://www.ecnv.org>

#### SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (100%) RESTON, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

📍 11212 Waples Mill Road, Suite 105, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (800) 772-1213  
🌐 <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>

#### EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (100%) FAIRFAX, FACETS

📍 10700 Page Avenue Suite B, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (703) 352-5090  
🌐 <http://www.facetscares.org>

#### STEAM GUITAR PROGRAM (100%) SPRINGFIELD, MUSIC FOR LIFE

📍 7453 Long Pine Drive, Springfield, VA 22151  
📞 (703) 283-8547  
🌐 <http://www.musicforlife.org>

#### DISABILITY BENEFITS (100%)

RESTON, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

📍 11212 Waples Mill Road, Suite 105, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (800) 772-1213  
🌐 <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>

#### DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES (100%) FAIRFAX, FAIRFAX-FALLS CHURCH COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

📍 12011 Government Center Parkway Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22035  
📞 (703) 324-4400  
🌐 <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/csb>

#### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (100%) FAIRFAX, BRITEPATHS

📍 4080 Chain Bridge Road, 2nd Floor, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (703) 273-8829 ext102  
🌐 <https://britepaths.org>

#### PARK (100%)

MCLEAN, GREAT FALLS PARK

📍 9200 Old Dominion Drive, Mclean, VA 22102  
📞 (703) 757-3101  
🌐 <http://www.nps.gov/grfa>

#### PARKS (100%)

WASHINGTON, DC, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

📍 1849 C Street Northwest, Washington, DC 20240-  
📞 (202) 208-6843  
🌐 <http://www.nps.gov>

#### DIVISION OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES (92%) FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

📍 11150 Fairfax Boulevard Suite 300, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (703) 359-1124  
🌐 <http://www.vadrs.org>

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (100%) FAIRFAX, BRITEPATHS

📍 4080 Chain Bridge Road, 2nd Floor, Fairfax, VA 22030  
📞 (703) 273-8829 ext102  
🌐 <https://britepaths.org>



Address



Phone #



Website



## WHERE CAN I FIND FURTHER INFORMATION?

Read on for more tips and tools to improve your social wellbeing. Plus, learn about the research and data behind the survey.



### FURTHER READING:

[Stay socially connected with tips from Virginia Easy Access](#)

[Find a confidential helpline or hotline to meet your needs](#)

[Stay engaged with Commit to Connect resources](#)

[Learn to use technology to enjoy the things you want to do](#)

[Join a group or find an event at Meetup.com](#)

[Find community and companionship for anyone over 50 with Stitch.net](#)

[Preserve and share your unique journey at StoryCorps](#)

[Explore Person-Centered Options Counseling for Long-Term Care](#)

Save

### My Profile

My Links | **My Plans**

Social Health Plan Fri 05/12/2023 Myself  
Social Health Plan Tue 1/9/2024 Client

# Audrey's Whole Self

Found an empowering community at her local Center for Independent Living

Excited for future career growth working with Pathways to Careers

Learned how SNAP could help her afford food on her own

Finally feels in control of her life and her future

# How the Social Health Connector Works



1. The individual answers a set of questions.



2. Natural Language analysis derives keywords that is processed by our model.



3. Generate a personalized social connection plan by logically connecting keywords with resources.

# Behind the Scenes: Design elements, coding and structure

Questionnaire Responses are Evaluated:

## Freeform:

Are there things that keep you from doing the things you enjoy?  
I need hearing aids.

## Multiple Choice:

Do any of the following make it harder to socialize with others?  
A. Hearing  
B. Vision

Keyword Extractions, Multi-choice stats, and similar “topics” are used to compare services to questionnaire responses

I need hearing aids

All Hearing Services

### Topic (Group) 1

- Senior Center – Transport
- Medical Transport
- Transportation - Bus

### Topic (Group) 2

- Hearing Aid Service
- Hearing Screening
- Library Audio Books

Recommended Services are ranked by relevancy and proximity

		Proximity	
		Relevancy	
Rank →			
1	Hearing Aid Service		
2	Hearing Screening 1		
3	Hearing Screening 2		
4	Library Audio Books		
...	...		

**Service Recommendations** employs concepts of machine learning to offer tailored services to residents based on relevancy and location.

# Any emerging trends?

**Age:**

47% are Under 60

53% are 60 +

- 16% of respondents in their 40's
- 15% of respondents in their 70's

**Lives with:**

50% Live Alone

44% Live with others

6% no answer

**Used the Social Health Connector:**

57% For Myself

18% for Family Member

6% for Friend

6% for Client

3% Other

# Risk & Protective keywords frequently mentioned



## HANDLE WITH CARE

*You may need additional support to deal with responses that have been shown to increase social isolation and loneliness*

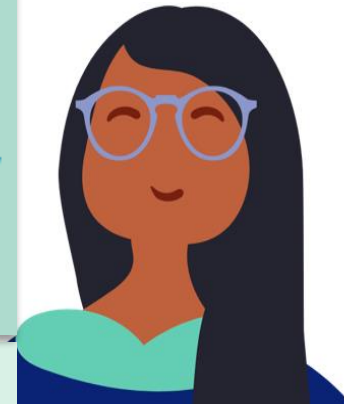
- Worrying
- Feeling alone
- Watching too much TV
- Smoking
- Drinking
- Unhealthy eating
- Sleeping too much



## SUPPORTING WELLBEING

*These responses have been shown to decrease your likelihood of social isolation or loneliness. Try to maintain and grow these social safety nets.*

- Listen
- Watch (birds /nature /movies)
- Read
- Visit with Friends
- Make Friends
- Learn new skills (cook)
- Exercise
- Get out more (dance)
- Garden



# Lessons Learned



## Efficient & flexible interfaces

UWWW & 211 - seamless integration to the backend of the solution.

Partnerships matter.



## Outreach and marketing

Before marketing outreach commence, ensure proper functioning of tool

Timing for phased marketing effort.

## Quality of the Data

Recommendations generated by a service are only as good as the underlying data. It is very important to have consistent and complete information provided under each of the data points.

## Strong test cohort

Make sure local partners and self advocates are part of the build.

Build in adequate time for iterative testing.

## Governance

Consider privacy and other security measures.

Adhere to state standards for information privacy.



# Kathy Spangler

Director of 211 Virginia,  
Virginia Department of Social Services



[EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov](https://EasyAccess.Virginia.Gov)





# 211 Virginia

- Statewide Directory
- 24/7-365 Contact Center
- Partner in the UWW National Data Platform

Kathy Spangler

Virginia Department of Social Services

[Kathy.spangler@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Kathy.spangler@dss.virginia.gov)

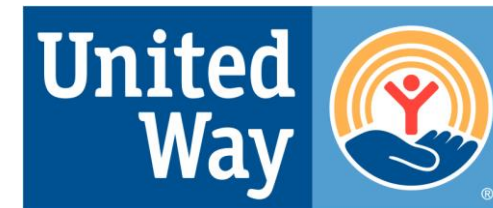
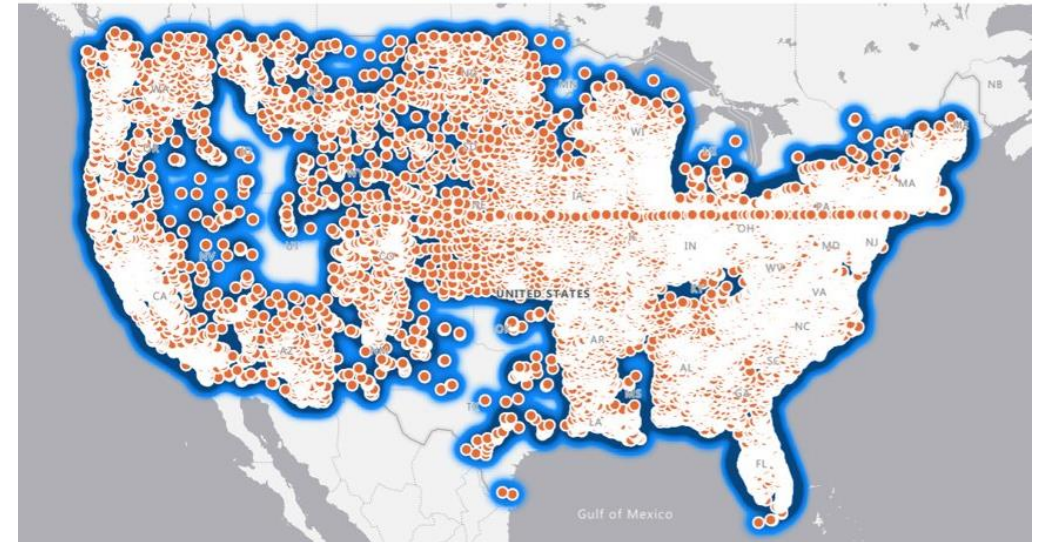


# Mary Miller

Director of 211 Data Projects,  
United Way Worldwide

# United Way Worldwide

- Increasing demand from private, public, and non-profit organizations for social and human services data
- Data previously existed in multiple directories, vendors, and proprietary formats
- The 211 National Data Platform became a single, authoritative, and trusted source of community social and human service resource data
- Access enabled via an API developer portal for third-party tools, vendors, and partners to embed 211 data in other applications/systems





# 211 National Data Platform

The first cohesive national repository of health and human services resources curated at a local level according to professional accreditation standards.

Brings together  
more than 1.6  
million human  
services and  
programs across  
the US



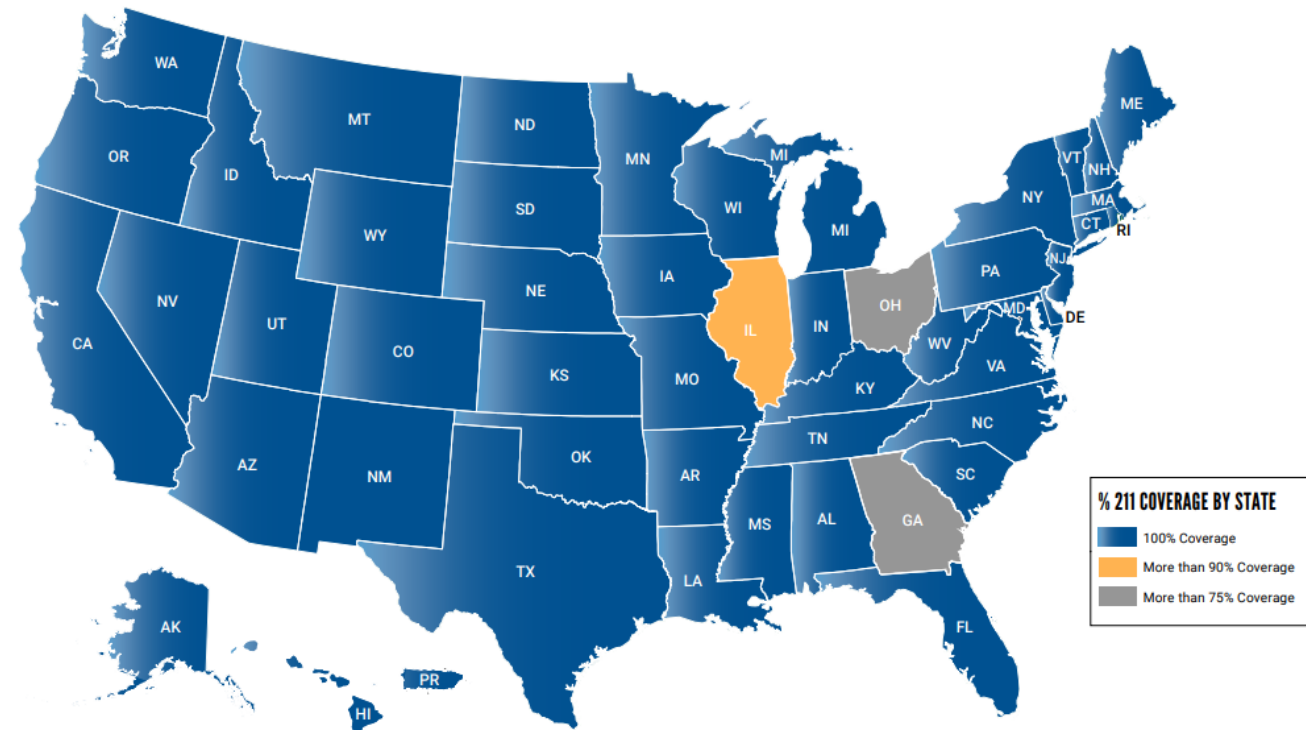
Allows for seamless  
sharing and  
updating of  
resource  
information with  
partners



Enables innovative and  
replicable tools via  
partnerships with local  
211s

# What is 211?

- Federally-designated **3-digit phone number for health and human services information and referrals**
- Accessible to **99% of the U.S. population** and all of Canada
  - Available **24/7, in 180+ languages**
  - Reachable through **multiple channels** – phone, text, web chat, email, online resource directories (capabilities vary by 211 provider)
- **Staffed by empathetic, diverse professionals** who reflect the communities they serve
- Provide referrals to programs and services from **locally curated resource directories**, developed and maintained by 211 staff with close ties to social service agencies and nonprofits in their communities
- **Operated and funded, in part, by United Way** (85% of 211s receive at least some funding from United Way)



**Thank You**





**Please enjoy a break  
until 2:30pm ET**

# Virtual Programming Panel

## **2024 COMMIT TO CONNECT AND ENGAGED NATIONAL SUMMIT TO INCREASE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

**Alex Glazebrook, Ph.D., M.S.W.**

Vice President, Programs  
Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP

# The Story of OATS

Tom Kamber and a group of volunteers launch OATS in NYC to help seniors learn and use technology to live better in the digital age



2004

2013



Launch of the Senior Planet Exploration Center in Manhattan—America's first technology-themed community center for older adults.

2014



OATS teaches 10,000 class sessions at over 70 partner sites + 30 new computer labs in NYC

2015



Expands programs outside of NYC to Plattsburgh, New York, and partners with local sponsors in Maryland, Florida and California.



# OATS Timeline

Foundation grants of more than \$3M help expand Senior Planet to Texas and Colorado.



2018

2020



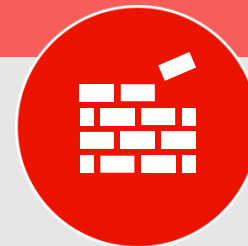
**2020:** \$3M grant from the Humana Foundation helps launch Aging Connected, a national campaign to bridge the digital divide.

2021



**2021:** OATS became a charitable affiliate of AARP, leading to increased reach and impact of partnerships and training.

2023



**2023:** Expanded licensing program to offer Senior Planet programs at 383 licensed sites across 30 states, and opened a new Senior Planet center in Miami!

2024



**2024:** Great things ahead!





# Senior Planet: Aging with Attitude

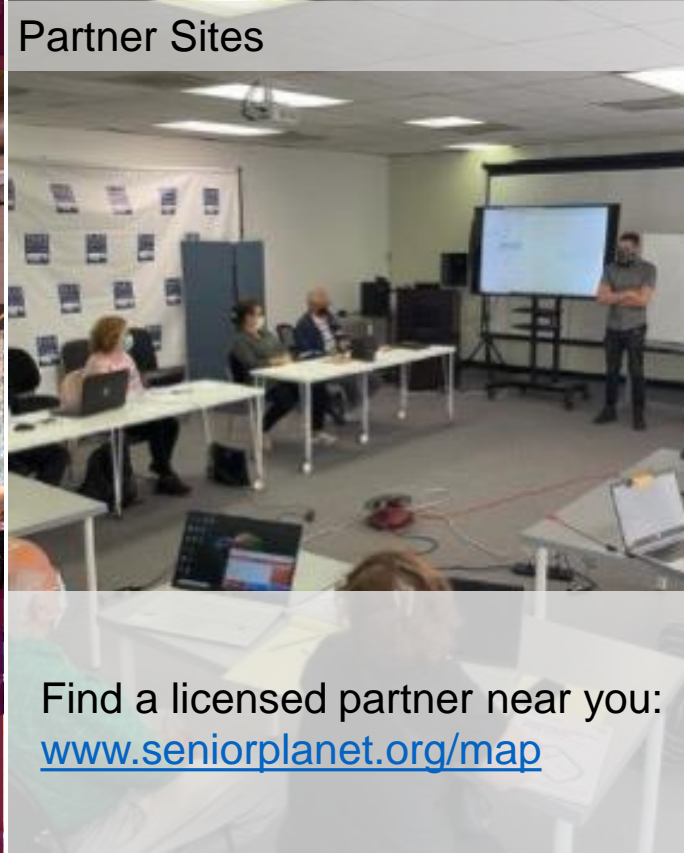
# Training Channels

Senior Planet Centers



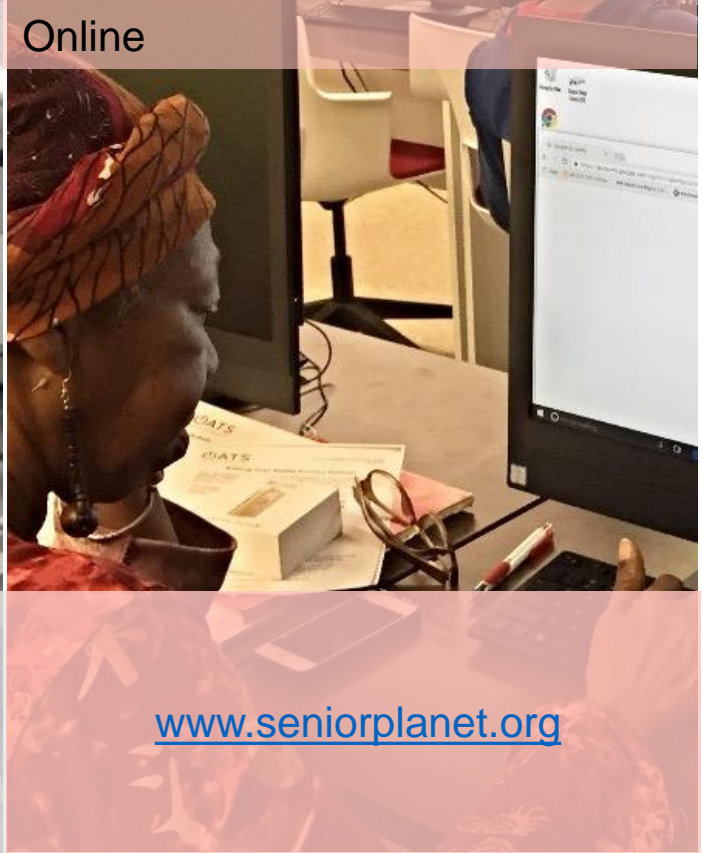
New York, Colorado, Florida

Partner Sites



Find a licensed partner near you:  
[www.seniorplanet.org/map](http://www.seniorplanet.org/map)

Online



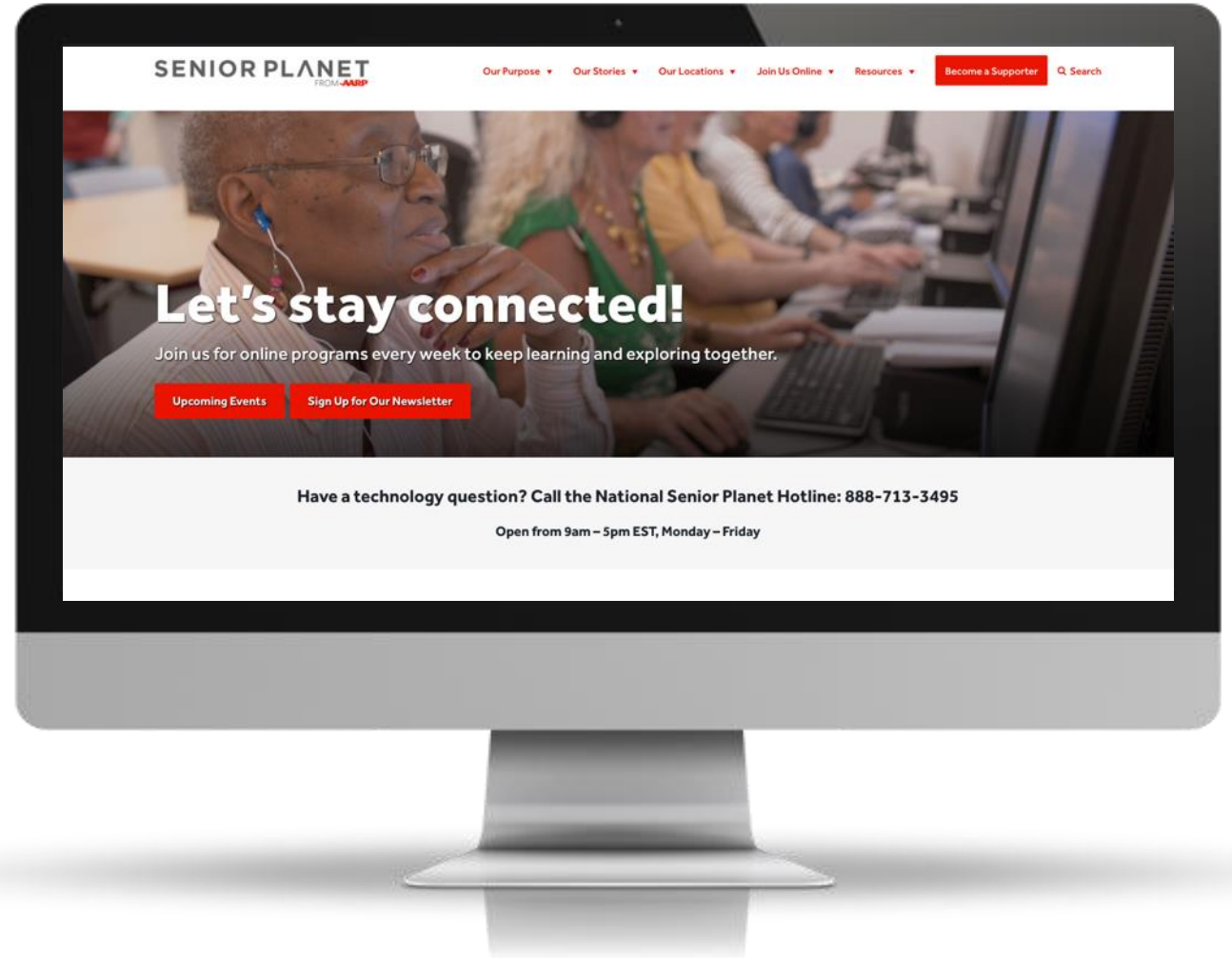
[www.seniorplanet.org](http://www.seniorplanet.org)



# Online Offerings and Support

- Free virtual classes, Monday – Friday. Variety of topics including tech basics, stretch and strength, finance, and more!
- Virtual discussion groups
- Multilingual programming in Spanish, Mandarin, and Vietnamese
- Articles for 60+ readers
- Tech Tip videos
- 1:1 tech support and coaching
- Toll-free national hotline: **(888) 713-3495**

[www.seniorplanet.org](http://www.seniorplanet.org)



## What Older Adults Tell Us

We make the time to talk to them

User feedback

Success stories

Surveys and evaluations

Focus groups

## Our Expertise & Approach

Celebrate the potential of older adults in society

Use tech to share older adult voices

Prioritize teaching free, mainstream tech

Inform the industry with research

Learn from and share what we're doing

## Best Practices in Teaching

Collaborative learning

New content grounded in lived experiences

Many opportunities for review

Moderately-paced instruction

Hands-on practice

## Unique Qualities of Older Adults

Lived experiences give perspective

Want to spend time in meaningful ways

Pride in accomplishments

Ambitious

Curious

Motivated

# OATS Methodology



Ms Misako Tsurumi  
iPad Essential Q3 2



**“I have learned that all of the benefits of being connected to society and friends and family. I have learned a lot from senior planet. it is a great place to learn about technology. I am so grateful for senior planet. I was referred from another senior center about Senior Planet and I am glad I came.”**



**“I trust Senior Planet completely. It has transformed my life. I live alone in a very small studio apartment in a very rural part of central Texas and a very small town...I don’t have any family around. When we went into quarantine, my world felt smaller and smaller, until I was almost feeling like I was starting to disappear. But my daughter, somehow or other, found out about Senior Planet. Senior Planet gave me my world back. Now it’s like I don’t have enough time!” – Jolynn B.**

# Impact Areas



# Find Us

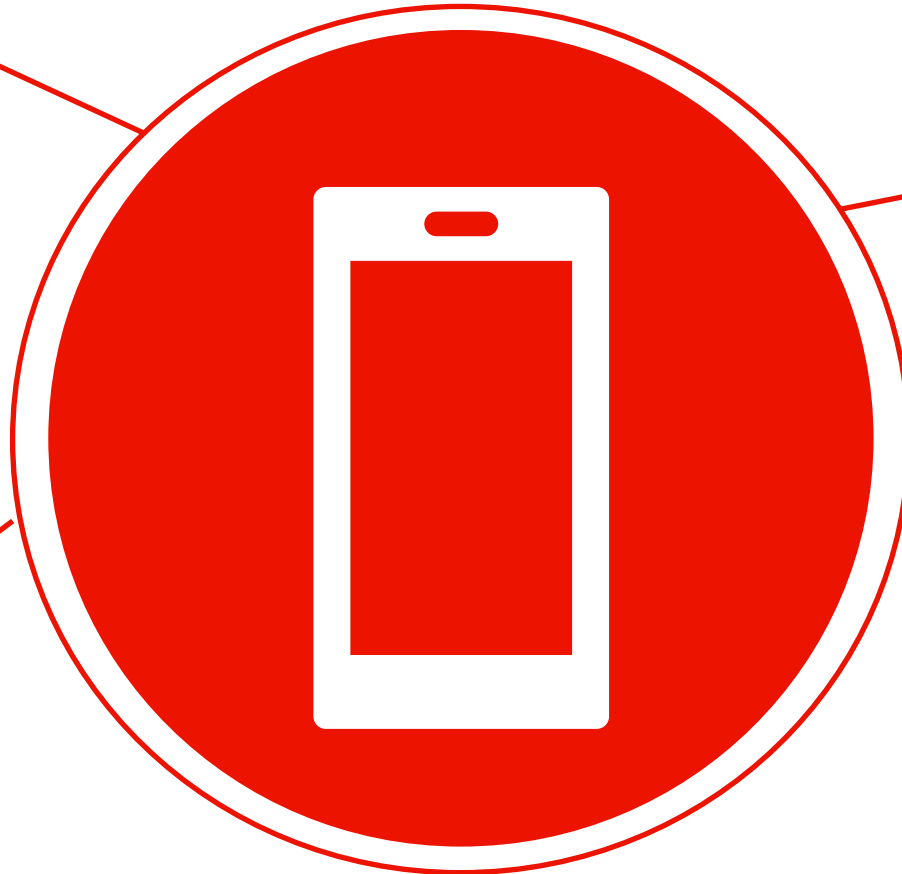
## **SeniorPlanet.org**

- Online classes
- Articles for 60+
- Videos and quizzes

## **OATS.org**

- Client Projects
- Licensing Info and Application

**Senior Planet Hotline:**  
(888) 713-3495





# Thank you

[www.oats.org](http://www.oats.org)

@OlderAdultsTech



[www.seniorplanet.org](http://www.seniorplanet.org)

@SeniorPlanet



**OATS** | OLDER ADULTS  
TECHNOLOGY  
SERVICES  
FROM **AARP**

# Virtual Programming Panel

- Alex Glazebrook, Vice President, Programs, Senior Planet and Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP (Moderator)
- Lucas DeLuca, Director of Support Services, Amputee Coalition
- Joseph Rolandelli, OPAL Center Director, Baltimore County Department of Aging
- Rayna Sage, Co-Director, Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities at the University of Montana
- Rebecca Freeman, Section Chief- Service Operations, Division of Aging and Adult Services, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services



amputee  
coalition<sup>TM</sup>

# **A Cycle for Digital Engagement and Improvement**

Lucas DeLuca, Director of Support Services

Lucas DeLuca

---

Director of  
Support Services

---

Educator & ADA  
Coordinator

---

Amputee





## *Our Vision*

A world where our community thrives with equity and inclusion.

## Our Mission

To support, educate, and advocate for people impacted by limb loss and limb difference, fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work.



# AC “Digital” Support Cycle

- The Amputee Coalition provides a vast array of different programs virtually and thanks to our engagement cycle our community members thrive.
- Many of you may be familiar with the use feedback and assessment loops when finetuning programming. At the AC we have taken elements of that approach and applied it to continuous digital support service ecosystem. Thus allowing for engagement at any point during ones life.
- Recovery, community, and normalcy look different for everyone. Our focus is always to create multimodal and accessible opportunities for those interested.
- With all our support criteria listed, there is a focus on the duality between community members looking for support and providing support. This furthers our commitment to the disability credo of “nothing about us without us”.



# *Individual Engagement: Certified Peer Visitor (CPV) Program*

No one is potentially in a better position to understand about living life with an amputation or supporting a person with limb loss/difference than someone who has been there. An experienced, well-trained peer can offer encouragement and information from a place, and at a pace, that an individual in this circumstance can better absorb.



There are three categories of peer visitor that we train:

A person with limb loss or limb difference

A family member of a person with limb loss or limb difference

Military / VA: an individual with current or previous military or VA experience of is living with limb loss or limb difference.



# *Community Engagement: Support Group Network*

- Amputee support groups provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals living with limb loss or limb difference as well as their family members. They are an invaluable place to connect with others who have overcome similar challenges and setbacks. With 300 support groups registered with the Amputee Coalition, individuals with limb loss or limb difference and their families across the country are receiving the vital support to help them along their journey. Participation in support groups provides members the opportunity to express their feelings, learn helpful information, improve social skills and realize they are not alone. Please use the map below to locate a support group near you.



# *Community Engagement: Virtual Support Groups*

- In the wake of COVID over 100 AC affiliated Support Groups closed their doors. To help fill the vacuum, the AC began to hold virtual support group meetings led by community leaders and facilitated by AC staff. What began as a digital COVID solution has become a mainstay at the coalition and a favorite among those with limb loss and limb difference.
- The AC now hosts 6 virtual support groups that meet once a month. There are over 450 community members registered and the groups continue to grow.
- The groups include Pacific, Mountain, Central, and East Coast time zones and have been expanded to include a caregiver group, young adult group, and a Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color group.





**AC Connect - the premier virtual space for connecting the limb loss and limb difference community.**

- AC Connect is an exciting new virtual space for connecting the limb loss and limb difference community. The site is designed to bring people together around a centralized, shared organization-based experience for expansive online collaboration and growth.
  - If you are familiar with a list-serve and you sprinkle in a little reddit with a dash of facebook you have our general UI.
  - With AC Connect users can...
    - Engage with other community members, volunteers, medical professionals, and AC Staff.
    - Provide feedback on critical issues impacting the limb loss and limb difference community.
    - Elevate your voice and grow your network to better advocate for yourself and our community.
-



# *Systemic Engagement: Healthcare Partnership Program*

- Today, almost 2 million Americans have experienced amputations or were born with limb difference. Another 28 million people are at risk for amputation. Hospital and rehab facilities across the country see the importance of peer support as an effective intervention to assist their patients as they cope with limb loss. The Amputee Coalition offers partnerships with these facilities to share our expertise, training curriculum and patient education materials so that the hospital can easily integrate a highly successful peer support program into their rehabilitation framework.
- Benefits to becoming a healthcare partner include...
  - Establishing a nationally recognized peer support program for amputees.
  - Help meeting CARF and TJC standards on peer support for facilities with an Amputee designation.
  - Have a hospital staff member trained as a Certified Peer Visitor Trainer to teach CPVs at any healthcare facility.
  - Receive an annual kit containing well-designed and scientifically reviewed materials for people with limb loss and limb difference.



# Community Connections

Our online database — *Community Connections* — provides a convenient way to locate national, state-based, and local resources.

- Search by zip code
- Find the resources closest to you
- Search by topic, such as housing, financial help, home modifications, etc.

<https://www.amputee-coalition.org/limb-loss-resource-center/community-connections/>



# Thoughts or Questions?

---

Thank You Commit to Connect,  
engAGED, USAging, and the ACL!



# The OPAL Center



**OPAL  
CENTER**

*Online Programs  
For Adult Learning*

**Joseph (Joey) Rolandelli**

OPAL Center Director

Baltimore County Department of Aging

611 Central Ave, Room 320

Towson, MD 21204

410-887-1929

[jrolandelli@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jrolandelli@baltimorecountymd.gov)

# What is OPAL?

- OPAL stands for Online Programs for Adult Learning. OPAL is a virtual senior center offering online programs to members age 50+ and is brought to you by the Baltimore County Department of Aging.
- Utilizes Zoom through the MySeniorCenter.com
- OPAL provides programs to members and BCDA senior centers that you can access from anywhere - on your computer, tablet or phone.



# What does **OPAL** Offer?

- Online Classes
- Hybrid Classes – you can join remotely or join in-person at the host senior center in Baltimore County
- Evidence-based programs offer proven ways to promote health and prevent disease among older adults based on research and provide documented health benefits. These programs provide important health information, including proven strategies for managing chronic conditions, building strength and preventing falls.
- Caregiver Programs



- Local Resources and Services
- The Baltimore Ravens
- Giant Foods
- AARP
- Alzheimer's Association
- Smithsonian Institute
- National Park Services
- National WWII Museum
- Central Michigan University
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- The Mob Museum
- Cleveland Museum of Art

## Program Providers for OPAL

---



# OPAL By The Numbers

**2023**

**Users:** 379

**Total hours:**  
1833

**Most popular programs:** Evidence-Based/Physical Activity, Creative arts, Spanish

**2024 Q1**

**Users:** 142

**Total hours:**  
881

**Satisfaction  
Survey**

**54% positive  
satisfaction**

**44% neutral**

**70% rated high  
on ease of use**

# Testimonials

“[She] appreciates the ability to attend programs that would otherwise be out of reach to [her].”

- *Alice (75)*

“The OPAL Center has opened a new window for me to participate online; meet new people, and access information vital for my health and wellness.”

- *Marsha (71)*

# Thank you!



**OPAL  
CENTER**

*Online Programs  
For Adult Learning*

**Joseph (Joey) Rolandelli**

OPAL Center Director

Baltimore County Department of Aging

611 Central Ave, Room 320

Towson, MD 21204

410-887-1929

[jrolandelli@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jrolandelli@baltimorecountymd.gov)

# The Peer Collective: Building social connections for disabled people

Rayna Sage, PhD

The Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities – RTC:Rural

# Funding statement

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90IFDV0022). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this poster do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

# The problem

- Disabled people experience additional barriers to social connection not experienced by people without disabilities
  - Inaccessible environments
  - Transportation
  - Personal assistance needs
  - Poverty
  - Stigma and exclusionary policies and practices
  - Access and comfort with technology

# Project Connect

- 3-year grant funded in 2021
- Participatory curriculum development (PCD)
  - Centers for Independent Living (CIL) staff and consumers
  - Iterative process
- Resulted in a 6-week online workshop to be facilitated by CIL staff and peer advocates – “The Peer Collective”
- Evaluation in process with 9 CILs running two workshops with a waitlist control group evaluation method

# The Peer Collective (in evaluation phase)

<https://peercollective.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>



## Peer Collective



Your Supports



Knowing Yourself



Self-Talk



Relating to Others



Successful Conversations

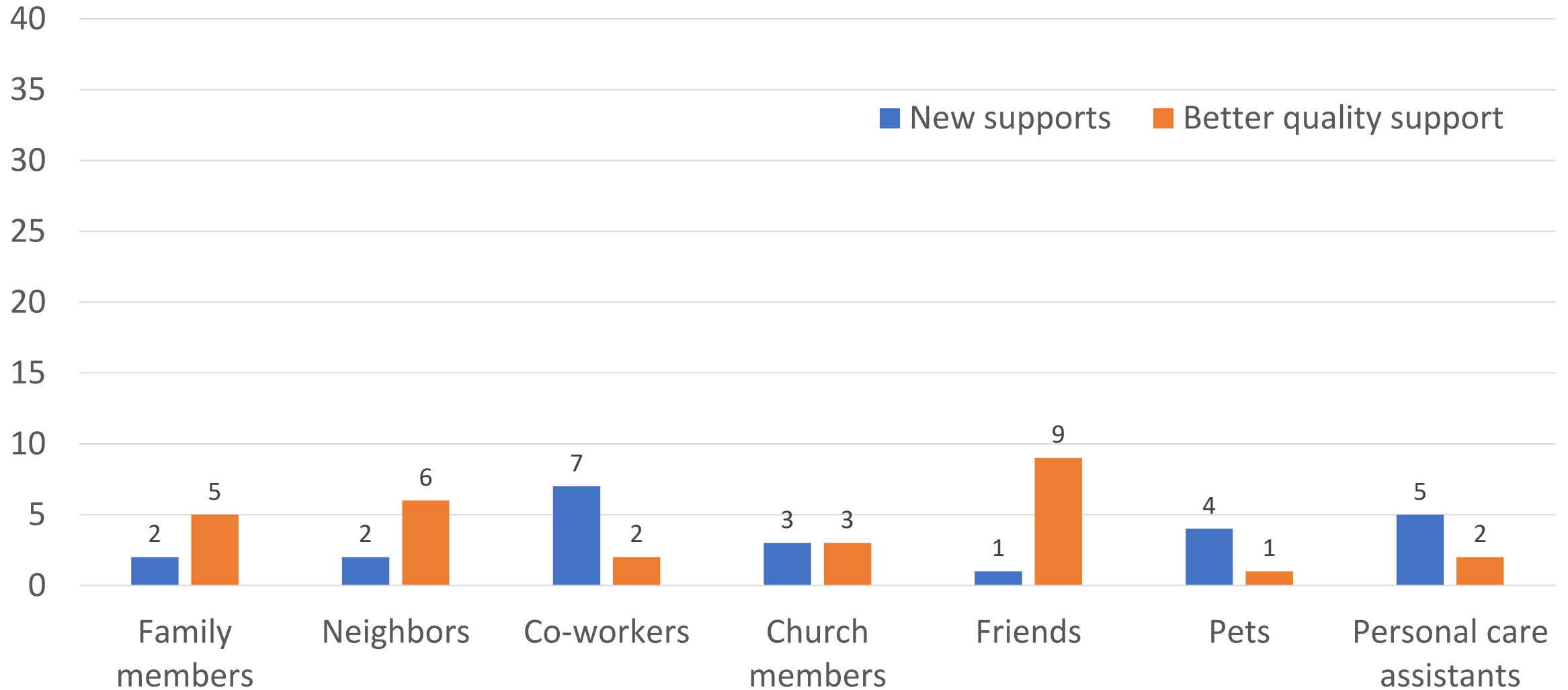


Wrap Up

# The Peer Collective

- Your Supports
- Knowing Yourself
- Self-Talk
- Relating to Others
- Successful Conversations
- Wrap Up

# Survey Results on Social Support (n=42)



“Well, I've learned self-confidence and I'm trying to learn how to be social again. With COVID, it was... My personal experience was bad and like everything was on Zoom and I'm starting to go out again, eat out and talk to people.”

Workshop consumer, Arizona

“I liked learning about the different people and their strengths and weaknesses, and then I didn't feel so alone in my strengths and weaknesses...it really helped me strengthen my skills where I felt I was a little bit weak in before and it also helped me know that I was a little more talented than I thought I was, too. It gave me confidence where I didn't know I could have it before.”

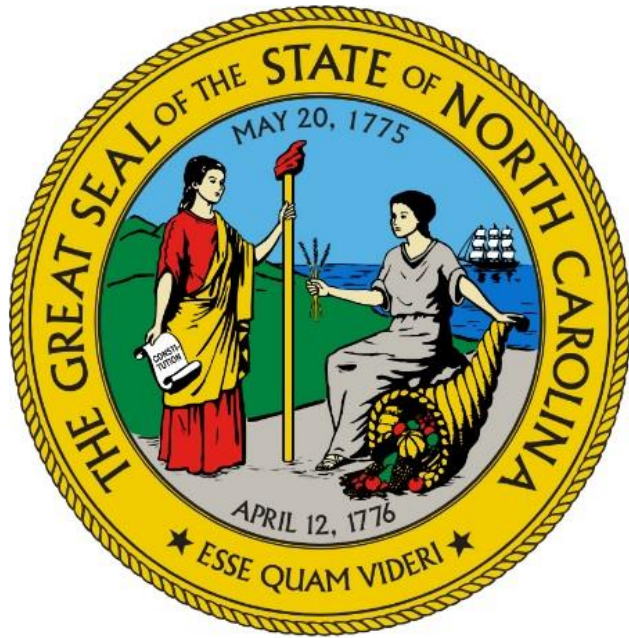
Workshop consumer, Washington state

# Process lessons learned

- Recruitment
  - What makes participating in an online workshop appealing?
- Supporting technology use
  - Time, patience, and relationships...and patience
  - Motivational interview techniques for working with resistance
- Flexibility and being open
  - Strictly online may not be feasible, ethical, or desired
- Facilitator supports and empowerment
- Independent Living Philosophy

# Contact

- Rayna Sage, Principal Investigator – [rayna.sage@umontana.edu](mailto:rayna.sage@umontana.edu)
- Krys Standley, Project Director – [krys.standley@umontana.edu](mailto:krys.standley@umontana.edu)



# **Social Bridging NC**

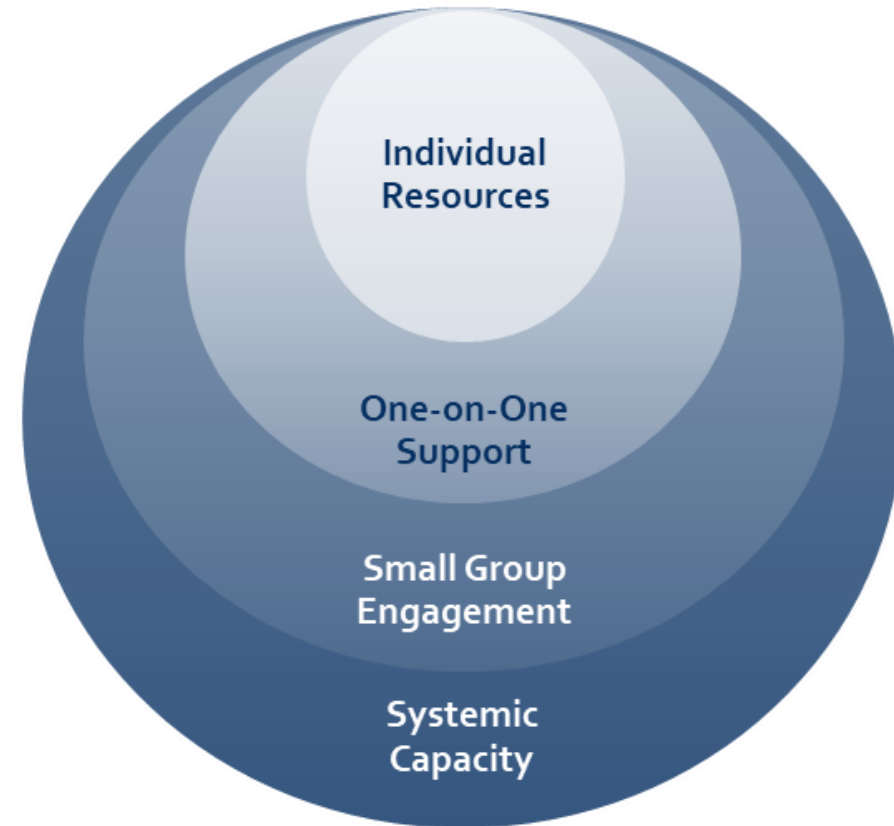
Rebecca Freeman

NCDHHS, Division of Aging

May 15, 2024

# Division of Aging Social Isolation Workgroup

Establish a **comprehensive person-centered** plan to **address social isolation, loneliness, and elevated suicide risk (SILES)** among older adults living in North Carolina.



# Division of Aging and Adult Services: Initial SILES Efforts


Develop research-based intervention to support individuals in need

- Assess impact of COVID and capacity to address SILES
- Train network staff in two interventions: ASIST and BE

Develop statewide social engagement web resource


# Original Social Engagement Site

[About ▾](#)[Programs ▾](#)[Refer](#)[Resources ▾](#)[Providers ▾](#)[Social Engagement ▾](#)[Workshop Calendar](#)[Contact](#)




HEALTHY AGING NC


An Initiative of The N.C. Center for Health & Wellness at UNC Asheville | Statement of Compassion & Inclusion



**PROGRAM PROVIDER**  
OFFER A PROGRAM



**CLINICIAN**  
REFER A PATIENT



**INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY**  
REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM

## Who we are

As North Carolina's statewide resource center for evidence-based health programs, Healthy Aging NC **connects people to the programs and agencies**

<https://healthyagingnc.org>

# Social Engagement Resources

Lubben Scale Social Engagement Self-Assessment

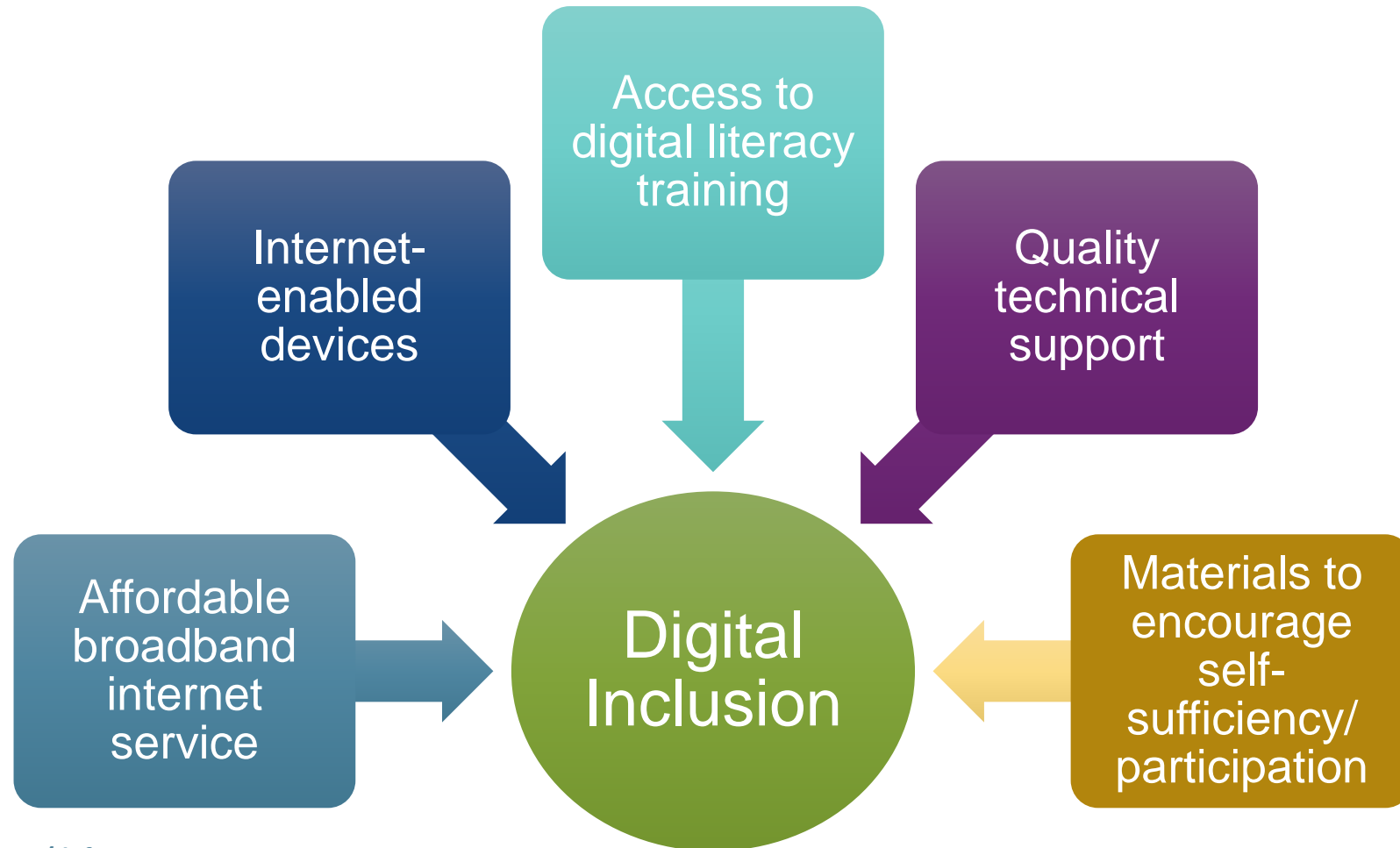
UCLA Loneliness Self Assessment

List of Social Engagement Resources

Senior Center Locator

Virtual Social Engagement Opportunities

# Digital Equity- *When Everyone Has I.T. Capacity Needed to Participate Fully in Society*



# Social Bridging NC

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[RESOURCES](#)[VIRTUAL EVENTS](#)[SOCIAL ISOLATION](#)[CONTACT](#)

*Embrace the Power of Connection*

Your Gateway to Virtual Community Events & Resources

Social Bridging NC is a central hub of information, resources, and programs available in North Carolina. These programs are dedicated to promoting social connectedness and engagement while addressing social isolation and loneliness.

ABOUT SOCIAL BRIDGING NC

[www.socialbridgingnc.org](http://www.socialbridgingnc.org)

# For More Information

Social Bridging NC

**North Carolina Medical Journal**

***Impact of Social Isolation on Older Adults in North Carolina***

**Rebecca Freeman**

**[Rebecca.freeman@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Rebecca.freeman@dhhs.nc.gov)**

**984-328-2497**

# Call to Action and Wrap-Up

- Meredith Hanley, Director, Community Capacity Building, USAging
- Katie Clark, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation, ACL

# Connect With Us!

## **engAGED**

Website:

[www.engagingolderadults.org](http://www.engagingolderadults.org)

Email:

[info@engagingolderadults.org](mailto:info@engagingolderadults.org)

Facebook: @engAGEDCenter

X: @engAGEDCenter

## **Commit to Connect**

Website:

[www.committtoconnect.org](http://www.committtoconnect.org)

Email:

[info@committtoconnect.org](mailto:info@committtoconnect.org)

# Thank You!

- We will send a follow up email containing links to the highlighted resources and the recordings from both days.
- The email will also include a survey evaluation link. Please take a moment to complete that survey as your feedback will help shape our future events and offerings.
- Keep an eye out for that email and thank you in advance for providing your feedback so we can ensure our content meets your needs!



COMMIT TO  
**Connect**

**engAGED**  
The National Resource Center  
for Engaging Older Adults

# Thank you for participating in the Virtual Summit!

**USAging**

 **ACL**  
Administration for Community Living

**May 14-15, 2024**