



News Release

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COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL ON AGING HONORS CHRONIC DISEASE SELF-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging, won the top 2016 “Best Practices” award from the Commonwealth Council on Aging for a wellness program that helps state corrections offenders learn to manage their chronic diseases and improve their well-being.

Each year, the council, which advises the Governor on issues affecting the 1.5 million Virginians age 60 and older, acknowledges organizations whose innovative programs can be replicated across the Commonwealth. The awards will be presented tonight at the Governor’s Conference on Aging as part of the Commonwealth’s recognition of May as [Older Virginians Month](#).

This year’s first-place award of \$5,000 honors [Senior Connections](#)’ “You Can! Live Well, Virginia!” initiative. Almost 120 offenders at the Deep Meadow and the former Powhatan state correctional centers have participated in the program’s six-week workshop, modeled after Stanford University’s Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.

“We are grateful to the Commonwealth Council on Aging for raising awareness and recognizing the needs of individuals who are preparing for reentry into their communities,” said Thelma Watson, executive director of Senior Connections. “Upwards of 85 percent of Virginia offenders will be released back into their communities. The positive health practices and strategies learned before reentry hold the same potential for community-wide benefits as they do for anyone else who has ever taken the course anywhere else.”

Nominees for Best Practices awards are judged on seven criteria, including community impact potential for replication, innovation, outcomes and promotion.

“As the Commonwealth Council on Aging celebrates the 10th anniversary of its ‘Best Practices’ program, we applaud these exciting and innovative ways that organizations have once

again provided critically needed programs and services for older Virginians,” said Dr. Richard Lindsay, chair of the council’s Best Practices Awards Committee.

The second-place award of \$3,000 recognizes the [Southern Area Agency on Aging’s Miles 4 Vets](#) program, a wheelchair accessible transportation service for older and disabled veterans in the Martinsville, Henry County and Franklin County area. Local veterans are transported to and from their homes to the Salem Veteran Affairs Medical Center each Wednesday at no cost.

A \$2,000 third-place award was given this year to Faith Works, a partnership between the local area agency on aging, [Mountain Empire Older Citizens](#), and the faith-based community to offer services including home repair. This effort promotes aging in place for hundreds of older people and addresses the need for home repairs and modifications for low-income older adults.

“For 10 years, these awards have highlighted the very best in innovation. This year’s winners, which include efforts to improve health in a special population, increase transportation in an underserved community, and offer ‘aging in place’ options through a home modification program, offer sound models that can hopefully be replicated across our state,” said Commissioner Jim Rothrock of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services.

Dominion Resources continues to support the Commonwealth Council on Aging’s Best Practices Awards, which serve to encourage organizations across the Commonwealth to develop and support programs and services that assist older adults to age in their community.

The council gave honorable mentions to the following organizations:

- Burke/West Springfield Senior Center Without Walls for its Seniors Giving Back to Community program
- Family Service of Roanoke Valley for its Adults Plus Counseling program
- Richmond Health and Wellness Program, a partnership of housing communities and other service organizations

For more information about the Commonwealth Council on Aging and the Best Practices awards, visit www.vda.virginia.gov/council.asp.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org or follow DARS on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vadars or Twitter at @vadars.