



GOVERNOR’S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON AGING

December 13, 2022, 10:00 AM

1700 West Washington Street, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

A general meeting of the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging was convened on **December 13, 2022**, in a hybrid format, 1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85007, notice having been duly given.

Members Present (8)	Members Absent (7)
Terri Spitz, Chair	Lela Alston
Belinda Akes	Lisa O’Neill
Barbara Marshall	Bonita Imus
Virginia Rountree (proxy: Molly McCarthy)	Jaime Aguilar
Bert Ijams	Teresa Manygoats
Carol Brown, Co-Chair	Brenda Holt
Rep. Tim Dunn	Steve Wagner
Shelli Silver (proxy: Dara Johnson)	
Staff and Guests Present (3)	
Mary Beals Luedtka	Sonya Colattur
Kainoa Spenser, GOYFF	

Call to Order

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, called the Governor’s Advisory Council on the Aging (GACA) meeting to order at **10:04 a.m.** with **8 members** and 3 staff and guests present. **Terri Spitz, Chair**, reviewed the procedures of the hybrid meeting and welcomed all those present.

Chair’s Remarks

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, started the meeting by reviewing the work accomplished by the Council over the last eight years, such as having a well-attended Alzheimer’s Caregiver Day, the incredible outcome of the Alzheimer’s Walks that took place across Arizona, and implementing mandatory Dementia training for APS investigators. She relayed the excitement of state agency and service provider campaigns focusing on the rise of Elder Abuse and homelessness. She stated the Council is excited about working with Governor-Elect Hobbs’ administration on aging-related issues and meeting with her policy advisors. **Terri Spitz, Chair**, emphasized she is eager for the future of Arizona and the aging population.

Director’s Remarks

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Kainoa Spenser** to deliver remarks on behalf of the Governor’s Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF) Executive Director Maria Cristina Fuentes. He highlighted the support the Council has given to the aging community of Arizona since 2015 through various accomplishments such as: 30 Senior Action Day events that have been held in communities around the state, GACA members have volunteered more than 1,800 hours on Council related activities and aging-related community outreach

across the state, and through a collaborative partnership with the Alzheimer's Association, mandatory, comprehensive training is now provided to APS investigators. The Council members were thanked for their service and dedication to helping the aging population of Arizona.

Roll Call

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, conducted a roll call of the Council.

Approval of Minutes

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, stated quorum was not met and the minutes will be voted on at the next meeting.

GrandPaws Pantry

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Sonya Colattur**, a high school junior and passionate changemaker in her community. She is one of [Arizona's Junior Achievement 18 Under 18](#) recipients for 2022, a TedX Youth Speaker, and a member of the [Arizona Governor's Youth Commission](#). Sonya is also the Founder of [GrandPaws Pantry](#), a 501©3 non-profit organization she began when she was 10 years old that provides pet supplies and mental health education and resources to older Arizonans who have companion pets and are living in assisted living facilities within Maricopa County. Additionally, Sonya is the Founder and Content Creator of [The Color of Us](#), an online platform for multiracial and multicultural youth to share their thoughts, opinions, and talents in a safe space.
- **Sonya** began her presentation by discussing the mission and purpose behind GrandPaws Pantry. Its mission is to encourage pet adoption, educate seniors on companion pets' positive mental health impact, and help pets with their needs. She discussed how she began this organization back in 2016 at the age of 10, and how her passion derived from wanting to help her grandmother's friends and their pets by delivering monthly pet food to seniors with companion pets at an assisted living facility. It is through the "Senior Companion Pet Care Program" that GrandPaws Pantry is able to provide seniors with focused financial assistance for those living in [Arizona Long Term Care System \(ALTCs\)](#)-approved facilities. Another positive aspect of this program is that it reduces the number of senior pet surrenders by covering the cost of the resources needed to take care of a companion animal.
- **Sonya** discussed that with the success of GrandPaws Pantry came to the need to find funding and volunteers. She stated this funding comes from grant awards and private community fundraising. To help with finding volunteers, the Youth Ambassador program was crafted to engage her friends along with other youth.
- **Sonya** continued by discussing how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted GrandPaws Pantry by limiting access to assisted living facilities, and the difficulties senior citizens faced who relied on GrandPaws Pantries resources. By utilizing resources such as social media platforms and raising money through online fundraising, the organization gained national attention. It was during this time that GrandPaws Pantry started including mental health tips and care cards to help seniors who were dealing with social isolation, depression, and/or anxiety. She ended her presentation with four recommendations for the Council on how to address social isolation in assisted living facilities: mental health staffing requirements, facilities allowing companion pets, increased Medicare/Medicaid funding for companion animals, and collaboration with community partners.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, thanked **Sonya** for her presentation.
- **Belinda Akes** relayed her gratitude for her dedication and hard work to help the aging population.
- **Dara Johnson**, proxy for **Virginia Rountree**, stated that she would like **Sonya** to come and speak at their case management meeting so the team can hear about the perspective and experience of a youth advocate entering assisted living facilities.
- **Bert Ijams** stated that she is grateful **Sonya** is recognizing a need and fulfilling it with her organization.
- **Representative Tim Dunn** relayed the importance of companion pets in seniors' mental health and offered the opportunity for **Sonya** to come down to the Capitol to meet with him to further discuss her work.

GACA Legacy Review

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, to discuss the legacy and impact of GACA over the last eight years. **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, discussed the Governor's Office of Aging and GACA's role in advising the Arizona Alzheimer's Task Force, established in 2010 to address solutions and craft plans for Arizonans living with dementia and Alzheimer's. GACA members were tasked with soliciting statewide input from over 500 stakeholders and more than 100 community organizations to guide the creation of a state aging plan. In 2015, with strong support from Governor Ducey and his administration, the [Arizona Alzheimer's State Plan, a Framework for Action](#) was finalized and disseminated.
- **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, reviewed the impact of the 30 Senior Action Days held across the state and every other year from 2009-2017. Taking place in both urban and rural cities, this event provided a convenient setting for older adults that allowed for direct access to advocates and policymakers to discuss shared concerns. The data collected at each event was shared with all Council liaisons and community partners during Governor Ducey's administration.
- In 2016, GACA recognized a need for a workgroup dedicated to finding solutions to problems impacting the aging population, leading to the creation of the Senior Caucus, now referred to as Community and Legislative Partners in Aging (CLPA). These meetings provide a nonpartisan forum for policymakers, organizations, and community members to discuss potential policy solutions for issues affecting older Arizonans.
- In compliance with its legislative mandate, GACA continues to focus on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. Based on a recommendation given by the Aging in Community (AIC) Workgroup to the [Arizona Alzheimer's State Plan, a Framework for Action](#) and in partnership with the [Western Arizona Council of Governments \(WACOG\)](#), GACA helped craft a two-day virtual dementia tour to train professionals in the non-healthcare field to interface with families of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. It exceeded its goal of 80 participants by 25%. 42 first responders, firefighters, and law enforcement officers participated along with 68 staff from state agencies, nonprofits, and aging network organizations. After participating, 97% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the meeting was beneficial to their understanding of the challenges faced by dementia.
- GACA looks to have statewide representation on the Council. Over the past eight years, there have been members from across the state representing urban and rural communities of all population sizes. GACA also hears from state liaisons, the [Arizona Department of Veteran Services](#) and AZ Aging (formerly referred to as the [Area Agency on Aging Association of Arizona](#)), in order to stay informed of their statewide programs and activities. The Council has hosted several statewide advocacy events and educational training opportunities, such as: AZ Aging conferences, the [Arizona Caregiver Coalition](#), Family Caregiver Day at the Capitol, and [Alzheimer's Association](#) State Day at the Capitol.
- **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, explained that as of 2020, more than one in five Americans, or 15.3 million adults, in the United States are caring for an adult loved one or a child with special needs. In Arizona, caregivers provide over 501 million hours of unpaid care per year. She discussed how these numbers are what led to GACA spearheading the passing of [Arizona Senate Bill 1172](#) in 2018, creating the Family Caregiver Reimbursement Program. This program works to help reimburse family caregivers for qualifying expenses for home modifications and assistive care technology to enable their qualified family members to be mobile, safe, and independent to circumvent having to be placed into institutional care. Beginning in January 2020, family caregivers can be reimbursed 50% for home modifications and up to \$1,000 for assisted care technology.
- **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, announced that from 2017-2019, GACA members have volunteered over 1,800 hours on aging-related advocacy, education, and outreach events across Arizona. Although volunteer hours are no longer tracked, volunteerism continues through various opportunities such as serving on other councils, committees, task forces, and coalitions, as well as supporting efforts that are crucial to older Arizonans.
- **Barbara Marshall** asked if the Family Caregiver Reimbursement Program is income based and how one applies. **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, responded that there is an income bracket for eligibility, and individuals can either reach out to the Arizona Caregiver Coalition to help with the paperwork or reach out directly to the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). To find out more details, visit azcaregiver.org/service/fcrp.

Workgroup Update

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, stated that **Brenda Holt** is not in attendance but the AIC Workgroup has achieved all but one of its four major goals. It is still going to work on pushing a bill through to set up a task force to review the Alzheimer's State Plan. She continued stating that **Brenda Holt** would be stepping down as chair of the workgroup and the position is vacant for interested individuals. **Terri Spitz, Chair**, relayed that the AIC Workgroup Chair doesn't have to be a council member, and when considering recruitment, look for individuals within each of the members' respective agencies. She added that the workgroup is also looking for two additional members, and any recommendations can be submitted to **Terri Spitz, Chair**, or Kainoa Spenser.

Council Member and Liaison Roundtable

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, emphasized the importance of reaching out to caregivers or those living alone to ensure they feel supported, especially during the holiday season. She went on to give an update that the Alzheimer's Association just finished their statewide Walks to End Alzheimer's with a successful turnout across the state and around 9,000 people at the Phoenix walk. **Terri Spitz, Chair**, stated that the Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter has formed an African American Advisory Council, which will work with organizations in the Central/South Phoenix area to help plan community forums to better serve this population. One of the major goals for the Alzheimer's Association Desert Southwest Chapter is to better support people through companies knowing that there are over 257,000 unpaid caregivers working and Arizona has the highest number of hours that an unpaid caregiver spends on taking care of someone with Alzheimer's and dementia so it is an important issue to address.
- **Belinda Akes** stated at the [Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens](#) is working on a Christmas Present and Resource Program for the 50 seniors they serve in Eloy. She continued by highlighting the expansion of their [Meals on Wheels](#) program to now service Apache Junction, as well as to the Santa Cruz Valley Food Pantry thanks to a new kitchen they opened up. **Belinda** added that with the expanded territory, more volunteers are needed.
- **Bert Ijams** stated that there is a huge need for volunteers for her area of [Meals on Wheels](#) as she has seen a 46% increase in requests since last year alone.
- **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, relayed that on December 22, 2022, WACOG is hosting an event with the [Yuma Veterans Home](#) where they will donate two robotic companion pets to their memory care facility. She highlighted WACOG efforts during the month of November recognized as both Alzheimer's Awareness and Family Caregiver Awareness Month. Nine proclamations were distributed from cities and towns in their region, and they were able to participate in multiple town council meetings. **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, continued by discussing the success of their region's Alzheimer's Association Walk, highlighting that they were able to fundraise over their desired amount. The Fall Prevention seminars closed out for the year with their last event in November. During 2022, there has been a tremendous success on behalf of WACOG and the Falls Coalition that work in that region to be able to connect with the professionals that should be involved in fall prevention. WACOG's Elder Abuse Awareness and Prevention seminars had a great response, leading to the continuation of the pilot program, and the development of building out teams in 2023. **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, ended that she is looking to expand the program model around the topic of filling Advanced Directives while living with dementia.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Dara Johnson**, proxy for **Shelli Silver**, to give an update on the [Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System \(AHCCCS\)](#). **Dara** stated the [Arizona Long-Term Care System \(ALTCS\)](#) is implementing a new service delivery model aimed at addressing social isolation in older Arizonans that will take effect in 2023. This new policy will allow the health plan to work with cross-habilitation or skill training providers to better assist members who have been assessed for social isolation to receive the necessary services. She discussed how AHCCCS is finalizing its 2023 Arizona Olmstead Plan which seeks to mitigate institutionalization and ensure there are community-based options available for the members. **Dara** relayed that final updates have been made to the [Home and Community-Based Settings \(HCBS\) Rules](#), furthering efforts to ensure providers are complying with

regulations that support the individuals receiving HCBS services through integration into their communities and have full access to the benefits of community living. She is pleased to report that they don't have full compliance and believe that all of the providers can comply by March of 2023 which was communicated to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

- **Representative Tim Dunn** discussed the various pieces of legislation he has sponsored over the years based on recommendations from the Council that has uplifted the lives of the aging population. He stated that members to reach out to discuss different ways that CLPA and legislators can help with these issues in the new year.
- **Molly McCarthy**, proxy for **Virginia Rountree**, stated that the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Conference is on June 15th, 2023. She discussed the release of the [Administration for Community Living Older Americans Profile](#) for 2021, and how the 2020 census data was finalized and compared with the 2010 census data. In Arizona, the population of individuals aged 65 and older has increased by more than 50%. **Molly** stated that 10 of their employees have completed dementia and Alzheimer's training and 33 currently working to complete their training.
 - **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, asked why the report uses 65 and older for the aging population. **Molly** responded that it is most likely so it aligns with the census data.
- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, introduced **Mary Beals-Luedtka** to give an overview of the different program successes and challenges from the Regions of AZ Aging. The full region program highlights and challenges can be found [here](#).

Upcoming Meeting

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, thanked council members for their hard work and wished them happy holidays. She reminded members that the next meeting is on **February 22, 2023, at 10 a.m.** in a hybrid format, with in-person and virtual options available.

Adjournment

- **Terri Spitz, Chair**, asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Carol Brown, Co-Chair**, moved to adjourn.
 - **Barbara Marshall** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes and the meeting adjourned at **11:46 a.m.**

Dated 13 of December 2022
Governor's Advisory Council on Aging
Respectfully Submitted By:
Kainoa Spenser
GOYFF