**GENERAL MEMBER STATEWIDE MEETING
3.17.21 via WebEx**

**Topic:** “*Social Isolation and Loneliness among Elderly and Disabled Adults: How to Identify It, Why It Matters, and Tech and No-Tech Interventions*”

**Guest Speaker:** E.A. Casey ([ecasey@AARP.org](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/ecasey%40AARP.org))

**PRESENT.** Laura Cockman, Kevin Robertson, Nancy Warren, Ann Elmore, Tadra Martin, Pam Palmer, John Maron, Laura Schlabach, Autumn Cox, Billie Lister, Brittany Hughes, Diane Trainor, Haley Gigowski, Heather Magill, Jennifer Stuart, Latawnya Hall, Laura McCracken, Lisa Jones, Lisa Vinson-Pope, Myra Austin, Rosalyn Pettyford, Shannon Warren, Stevie John, Kathi Graham, Kathleen Titsworth, Mercedes Restucha-Klem, Tammy Chaney, Tiketha Collins, Kim Lamon-Loperfido, Kris O’Keefe McCusker, Joanne Otuonye, Lakendra Dixon, Althea Taylor Jones, April Black, Connie Morse, Janelle Lewis, Kelly Robeson, Mary Marlin, Pamela Lloyd, Rebecah Bova, Chandra Henson, Stacy Ferrell, Vickie Alston, American Sign Language Interpreters: Erin Mansfield and Mary-Beth Brown

**CALL TO ORDER**. Our meeting was called to order by Kevin Robertson, Chair Elect.

This meeting was hosted via WebEx, scheduled by Kevin Robertson. We are thankful for him help setting up this virtual meeting and posting the meeting agenda for us.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES.** The minutes from the general meeting held January 17, 2020 were presented for approval. *Ann Elmore motioned to approve the minutes and Pam Palmer seconded the motion. All agreed and with no further discussion the motion carried.*

**TREASURER’S REPORT.** Pam Palmer presented the treasurer’s report for the upcoming year. She shared the bank balance as of July 1, 2020 was $15,991.01 with a reserve of ($3,000) and the ending balance as of March 17, 2021 is $12,901.45.

**GUEST SPEAKER.** Ann Elmore welcomed E.A. Casey from AARP. Casey is a strategic advisor and program manager with AARP Foundation. With a focus on social connectedness, Casey has led the development and implementation of strategies and programs to combat isolation and loneliness among vulnerable older adults. Working with researchers and practitioners from around the globe, Casey has developed and managed a broad portfolio of research, programs, and grants to address isolation. Casey now helps to manage [Connect2Affect.com](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/Connect2Affect.com). That platform elevates awareness of isolation as the major public health issue it is. It also drives creation and dissemination of solutions. Casey holds a Master of Public Affairs from the LBJ School at the University of Texas at Austin. Currently, Casey is working on a master’s in clinical social work at Catholic University.

**PRESENTATION.** Casey shared that the detriments of social isolation affects 1 in 4 adults (pre pandemic data). She continued that the AARP Foundation works to end senior poverty by helping vulnerable older adults build economic opportunity and social connectedness. As AARP’s charitable affiliate, we serve AARP members and nonmembers alike. Bolstered by vigorous legal advocacy, we spark bold, innovative solutions that foster resilience, strengthen communities and restore hope.

Key Points:

*Social Isolation was a health issue* ***before*** *the current pandemic.*

* Research shows that the negative health effects of chronic isolation and loneliness, while harmful at any age, are especially dangerous for people over 50.
* Social isolation and loneliness are associated with:
1. Higher blood pressure
2. Increased susceptibility to the flu
3. Greater risk of heart disease
4. Earlier onset of dementia

*Social Isolation & Loneliness*

* **Social isolation** (objective) typically refers to the objective lack of (or limited) social contact with others and is marked by a person having few social network ties, having infrequent social contact, or, potentially, living alone.
* **Loneliness** (subjective) refers to the perception of social isolation or the subjective feeling of being lonely.

*So, what is social isolation*? It’s the result of being disconnected from support groups of family, friends and community. Risk factors and causes of isolation include:

* Limited/unaffordable transportation
* Societal barriers (ageism or other forms of discrimination)
* Rural, unsafe or inaccessible neighborhood
* Hearing/Vision loss
* Chronic health conditions
* Retirement
* Loss of memory
* Low-income
* Limited mobility
* Living alone
* Being a caregiver
* Loss of a spouse

*Fixing broken connections can help people thrive.*

Ways organizations can help people fix broken connections:

* **Treat health issues that create barriers to connection:** fall prevention programs that increase balance, strength, and the confidence to go out more often.
* **Provide support through major life transitions.** Support groups can help someone feel connected while coping with a significant change.
* **Address societal barriers that exclude older adults.** For instance, policy changes that support an older workforce.
* **Ensure availability of services and support tailored to the needs of diverse communities.** Home-sharing models can make aging in place more affordable.
* **Create opportunity for affordable and accessible transportation.** Volunteer transportation services make it easier for older adults to get around their community.

*Recommendations*
Consensus Study: Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Opportunities for the Health Care System

* Develop a more robust evidence base for effective assessment, prevention, and intervention strategies for social isolation and loneliness
* Translate current research into health care practices in order to reduce the negative health impacts of social isolation and loneliness
* Improve awareness of the health and medical impacts of social isolation and loneliness across the health care workforce and among members of the public
* Strengthen ongoing education and training related to social isolation and loneliness in older adults for the health care workforce
* Strengthen ties between the health care system and community-based networks and resources that address social isolation and loneliness in older adults
* Improve Awareness: Health and aging organizations, relevant government agencies, and consumer-facing organizations should create public awareness and education campaigns that highlight the health impacts of social isolation and loneliness in adults.
* Strengthen ties between the health care system and community based networks and resources: Health care providers, organizations, and systems should partner with social service providers, including those serving vulnerable communities, in order to create effective team-based care (which includes services such as transportation and housing support) and to promote the use of tailored community-based services to address social isolation and loneliness in older adults.

*The COVID-19 Social Connectivity Paradox*

* Social [physical] distancing is both harmful and protective to older adults
* Pandemic underscores the need for clinical and community-based organizational collaboration to maintain the provision of services and programs to older adults
* Elements of solutions are already present:
* Older adults can be mobilized and capitalized upon as volunteers so they can remain engaged and combat social isolation risk among peers, family, etc.
* The aging social services network is critical infrastructure for reaching older underserved and/or marginalized persons
* Pre-COVID-19, awareness about the pervasiveness and seriousness of social isolation had begun to spur partnership and action to address its enormous human and financial tolls.
* Coordinated community action is now more critical than ever
* Older adults know they must physically isolate but often do not know the importance of maintaining strong social connections
* They may also lack the tactics or ability to maintain connections virtually
* *Immediate Action Items:*
1. Raise awareness on the issue among professional and lay communities
2. Universal access to reliable, broadband internet
3. Improved accessibility, feasibility, and appropriateness of technology for older persons
4. Longer term (but start now!): community resource mapping and navigation, clinical/provider partnership with community-based organizations on screening/referral systems with funding

*Tips for getting and staying connected*

We can all take steps to maintain and strengthen our ties to family and friends, expand our social circles, and involved in our communities — even during a pandemic that requires physical distancing to lessen disease spread.

1. Commit to contacting a friend or family member you haven't been in touch with regularly.
2. Schedule a time every day to call a friend.
3. Get outside and walk to stay physically active and enjoy fresh air.
4. Get involved in online group activities and trusted virtual communities — for example, groups that are organized around faith, fitness, movies, music, sports or books.
5. Check to see if your local senior center is offering virtual games or other activities online.
6. Volunteer to deepen your sense of purpose. There ways you can help from the safety of your home, like making calls, working on mailings or fundraising.
7. Say hello to your neighbors — just remember to keep a healthy distance of at least 6 feet! Meeting new people in your community is a great way to connect with people of all ages.
8. Do something pleasant or soothing for yourself every day. Keeping a positive frame of mind helps us connect.

*National Organizations and Resources*

1. **AARP Foundation Connect2Affect:** [Connect2Affect.org](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/Connect2Affect.org)
Learn more about social isolation and find resources and tools to help you stay connected.
2. **AARP Community Connections:** [aarpcommunityconnections.org](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/aarpcommunityconnections.org)Find or start a mutual aid group, get assistance, or connect with people in your community
3. **AARP Coronavirus Updates:** [aarp.org/coronavirus](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/aarp.org/coronavirus)
All the latest updates on the coronavirus, including tips for older adults on avoiding social isolation.
4. **AARP Create the Good:** [createthegood.aarp.org](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/createthegood.aarp.org)
Links to local home/remote volunteer opportunities.

Additional Resources:

[PowerPoint Slide Handouts](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/2021-03-17_ncpaaa_presentation_handout.pdf)

[FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit](https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit)

[Commit to Connect](https://acl.gov/CommitToConnect)

[Connect2Affect Tools](https://connect2affect.org/)

[Social Connectedness in Older Adults Factsheet](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/2021-03-17_connect2affect_social-connectedness-factsheet.pdf)

[National Institute on Aging – Social Isolation and Loneliness Outreach Toolkit](https://www.nia.nih.gov/ctctoolkit)

[Aging Connected: Getting Older Adults Online](https://agingconnected.org/)

[Senior Planet](https://seniorplanet.org/)

**COMMITTEE UPDATES.**

*April Black from the Division of Aging and Adult Services* – updated the group regarding a recent shared webinar with DAAS and NCPAAA regarding the stories the DAAS collected. April explained that the stories will be shared in effort to advocate for clients. She is encouraging that we view the recorded webinar and encourage social work staff collect additional stories and data to advocate for aging adults. Laura C. added that the webinar was informative because it discussed issues of funding, which will be important information to share with legislatures.

*YouTube recording* -  [DAAS & NC3PA: Real Stories, Real Impact Presentation](https://youtu.be/jKY9UBNw9EU)

Laura C. added that the DAAS is initiating paperwork for the Coronavirus Grant.

**Education Committee** – Ann Elmore and Tadra Martin shared that the annual conference will be virtual on May 17 – 19th, 2021. CEUs are pending approval and the committee is currently collecting the speaker agreements. Ann shared many thanks to the shared responsibility from folks other than just the Executive Board. The next planning meeting is this Friday, March 19th from 9:30-11:30 and we can share this link if anyone would like to participate.

**Advocacy Committee** – Nancy Warren shared that the American Rescue Plan Act will provide additional funds for Elder Justice. This additional funding will provide important APS, Elder Justice and Covid related abuse items. Nancy continued that the Partnership’s Advocacy Support Letter re: APS will be crucial in advocating for additional APS funds for older adults. Nancy added that in January, she read an [article by Thomas Goldsmith](https://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2021/01/27/nc-advocates-adult-protective-services-needs-multi-million-dollar-boost-from-state-to-fight-abuse-and-neglect/), NC Health News journalist, regarding the need for additional APS funds to fight abuse and neglect. She believed this article was on point and invited us to share with our organizations and partners.

**Awareness Committee** – John Maron shared that Stephanie is currently doing a SHIIP event and was unable to join us today. John continued that he is seeing that Senior Centers are talking that they may be able to reopen soon, and he is hopeful that he will be able to plan some small in person events soon. He shared that Ann recently hosted a few events for the CLE for attorneys who could complete credits re: topics like “investment fraud prevention” and “notaries.” John updated that he saw a recent email re: the HelpVul Project.

Ann added that April 16th is “National Healthcare Decisions Day” Please visit the [Secretary of State’s Website](https://www.sosnc.gov/divisions/advance_healthcare_directives) – it will show you statutory forms and links for anyone interested in completing Healthcare Directives. Also, the General Assembly has extended special allowances for video/remote notarizations and remote witnessing was extended until December 31st, 2021.

**Communications Committee** – Autumn shared to please continue checking the website and your email for updates from the Partnership. There is a flyer regarding the upcoming Annual Conference, information on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, in addition to upcoming educational opportunities. Please contact her if your organization would like anything added.

**Education Committee** – please send in membership application and dues if needed. Our committee attempts to keep dues minimal and feel that the dues are for quality presentations like today’s. Please mail this information into the address listed on the website, [ncp3a.org](file:///Users/pamelapalmer/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/B55C155E-6C8D-4454-B9AF-F5CC821F9B95/ncp3a.org). Pam added if we chose to mail the check and application in, please email her because she will go check the mailbox. Pam can send a PayPal request if you would prefer to pay electronically.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by

Laura Schlabach, Secretary