



Dancing Sky

Area Agency on Aging

Spring 2026 Newsletter - Your Quarterly News and Updates

[Visit our Website](#)

Our Mission

Dancing Sky works with rural communities to help older adults stay in control of their choices.

Our Vision

Together, older adults and communities thrive.

During National Senior Nutrition Month, Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging Raises Awareness of Nutrition Services for Older Adults

Healthy food and good nutrition are essential for older adults to maintain health, independence, and quality of life as they age. What we eat supports physical strength and brain health. Proper nutrition helps reduce the risk of chronic disease, supports immune function, and maintains cognitive health.



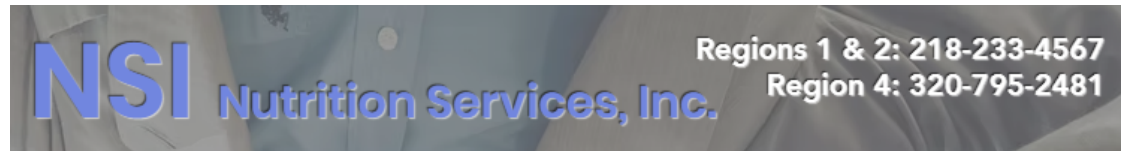
Food nourishes more than the body—it also supports connection. Shared meals and nutrition programs bring people together, boosting mood and reducing isolation and loneliness.

It can be challenging for many older adults to get the healthy and nutritious foods needed to maintain physical and cognitive health. This can lead to poor health outcomes. Proper nutrition is critical to reduce chronic illness, improve immune system functioning and enhance cognition. Food also brings people together, boosting mood and decreasing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Nutrition Services Inc works in collaboration with Dancing Sky and utilizes Older Americans Act Funds to provide meals for older adults in our 21-county planning and service area.

I also want to take a moment to thank all the staff and volunteers that support senior nutrition program in collaboration with us, it could not be done without YOU! In 2025 through our partnership with Nutrition services Inc 125,980 Congregate meals and 430,663 Home delivered meals were served. Reach out to us to learn more on how you or someone you know can get set up with a meal!

Heather Pender – Aging Program Director



Visit NSI's website to see a full listing of their meal site locations:

[Nutrition Services, Inc. Website](#)

Welcome to the Team

New Dancing Sky Board Member:

Gene Smith is a retired police officer of 30 years in Savage, MN and returned to rural MN after retiring. He enjoys fixing machinery and

runs a small farm. He served 6 years on the Battle Lake food shelf (two terms but now has a wait period before running again). Food access is his interest / passion. Welcome, Gene!

New Employee: Jessica Reed

Jessica started as a Resource Specialist on March 4, 2026. Previously she worked for Mahnomen County Social Services. During her time there, she worked in child support, adult waivers, protective services, and mental health. Jessica will be working from her home office in Mahnomen. Welcome, Jessica!



New Employee: Sharon Notch

Sharon started as a Resource Specialist on March 16, 2026. Her past career paths include Senior Linkage Line Advocate, Disability Linkage Line Coordinator, and Medicare Insurance producer with UCare & Arachas Insurance Group. She also has been a Nutrition Supervisor & Cook with Title III Senior Dining programs back in the day! Sharon will be working from her home office in Eagle Bend. Welcome, Sharon!

Staff Updates



New Role: Nancy Finstrom will now be serving as a Tier 2 Resource Coordinator with Minnesota Aging Pathways. While this role is still developing, it will focus on aligning



New Role: Anne Larson has transitioned to the Outreach Specialist role with Minnesota Aging Pathways. In this new role,

the collective work statewide through reviewing and editing protocols, and supporting quality assurances. Nancy was previously serving as a Tier 1 Resource Coordinator and has been with Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging for 17 years.

she will be traveling throughout the 21 county area doing presentations and outreach events. Prior to this role, Anne served as a Resource Specialist for the past 2 years.

Happy Retirement

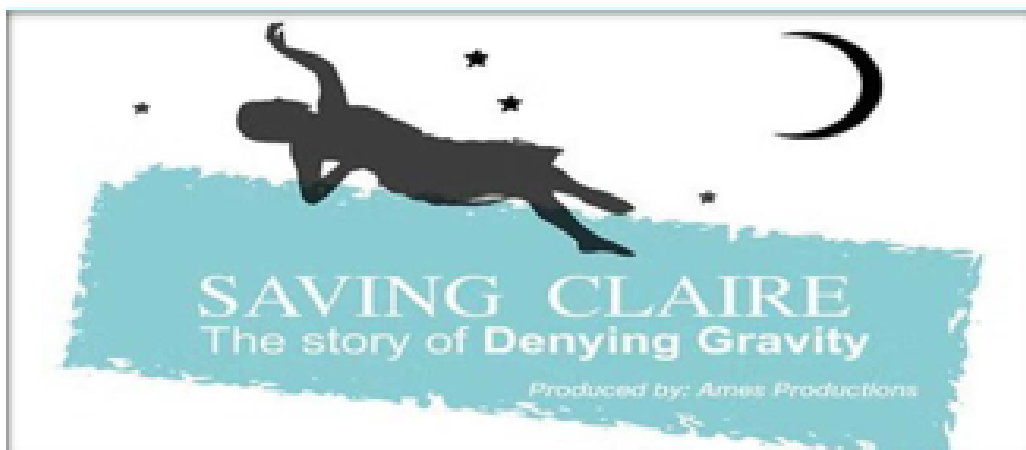
Retirement:

Renee Lorfald retired in February. She served in the Resource Specialist role for the past 3 years. We wish Renee all the best in her next chapter!



Retirement:

Kim Anderson will be retiring in April from her role as Resource Specialist. Kim has been with Minnesota Aging Pathways for the last 8 years. We wish Kim all the best in her next chapter!



Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging (AAA) recently hosted a special online private screening of the groundbreaking documentary *“Saving Claire,”* bringing together community members and local experts to raise awareness about fall prevention and improve health and wellness outcomes for older adults.

Saving Claire uses compelling storytelling and grassroots outreach to engage, educate, and empower communities about the serious impact of falls. Through personal stories and expert insight, the documentary highlights practical prevention strategies and the importance of proactive measures to help older adults maintain independence, safety, and quality of life.

Following the virtual screening, participants heard from a panel of local professionals, including an occupational therapist, a pharmacist, and area fire chiefs. The panel provided practical guidance on home safety modifications, medication management, emergency response considerations, and community-based prevention strategies designed to reduce fall risks.

Falls remain one of the leading causes of injury among older adults, often resulting in significant physical, emotional, and financial consequences. By hosting this online event, Dancing Sky AAA reinforced its commitment to proactive education and collaboration to help prevent falls before they happen.

“The strong participation and engagement during this event demonstrate how important fall prevention is to our community,” said an attendee. “By working together and sharing practical strategies, we can help older adults remain safe, independent, and healthy.”

Dancing Sky AAA continues to offer fall prevention resources and programs throughout the region.

Communities interested in hosting a special viewing of *Saving Claire* are encouraged to contact: Stephanie Aasness * (320) 766-1856 * stephanie@nwrdc.org

Upcoming Classes and Events

Matter of Balance at Bemidji Senior Center, starting 4/8/2026 and running for 8 weeks, meeting 1x per week on Wednesdays 1:30-3:30pm.

- o To register: Contact Verna at the Center at 218-751-8836.
- o Matter of Balance is an evidence-based program class that incorporates educational presentations, group brainstorming & discussion, and light movement to reduce the fear of falling and create actionable goals for increasing movement.

Enhance Fitness at the Alexandria Area YMCA, starting 5/27/2026 and running until 9/11/2026, meeting Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays at 11:15am.

- o To Register: <https://alexandriaymca.com/enhance-fitness>
- o Enhance Fitness is an evidence-based program exercise arthritis and falls prevention program that helps older adults at all levels of fitness become more active, energized, and empowered.

Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance class held at the New Life Church in Rothsay, led by Partners Living at Home, starting 4/13/2026 and running for 12 weeks, meeting 2x per week on Mondays and Thursdays 9am – 10am.

- o To register: Contact Partners Living at Home at 218-867-1234

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

FREE Virtual Event
Tuesday April 14 at 11:00 AM



Learning Objectives:

- *Understanding advance care planning and advance directives.
- *Learn why advance care planning is important.
- *Identify resources and help with advance care planning.



Register below:

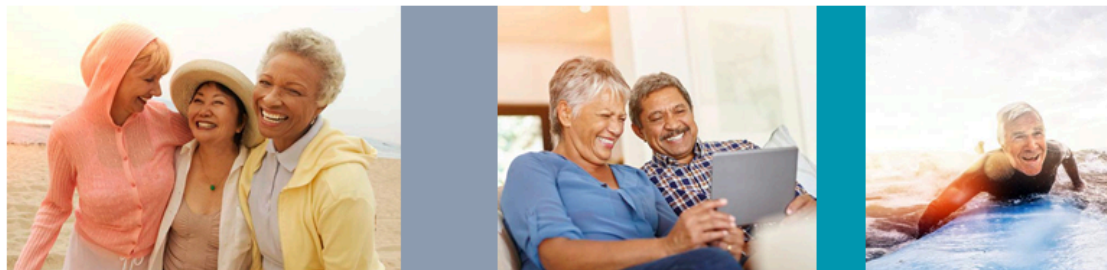
Eventbrite

If you require accommodations, please contact
Steph Aasness at stephanie@nwrdc.org

Callie Riley serves as the Regional Advocacy Director for Compassion & Choices, a national organization dedicated to improving care, expanding options, and empowering everyone to chart their own end-of-life journey.



This webinar is supported with funding from Age-Friendly Minnesota.



Social Security 101

Everything you wanted to know.



Securing today
and tomorrow

A FREE Virtual Workshop from Social Security

[SocialSecurity.gov](https://www.SocialSecurity.gov)

- When are you eligible to receive retirement benefits?
- How does early retirement affect your benefits?

Speaker:

David Baier, Public Affairs Specialist,
Social Security Administration

Event Coordinator:

Amy Dallmann,

- Do you qualify for disability, survivors, and spouse benefits?
- How do you get the most from your benefit?
- What is the future of Social Security?
- When should you file for Medicare?

Learn how to use [my Social Security](#) online account and other online services. You should go to:

www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount to create a [my Social Security](#) account and print out your *Social Security Statement* before attending the workshop.



Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
For questions or special accommodations contact:
amy@nwrdc.org or 218-745-9117

Date:
Wednesday, May 6th, 2026

Time:
1:00 PM CT

Registration:
Live Virtual Webinar Presentation

Eventbrite Registration



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS WEBINAR

**MONDAY, APRIL 13
12:00-1:00 p.m.**

FREE VIRTUAL EVENT

REGISTER ON:
Eventbrite or
email alarson@nwrdc.org

YOU WILL LEARN

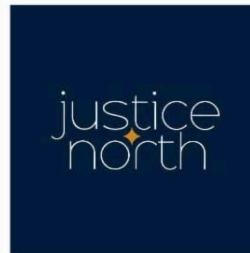
- **How Minnesota Aging Pathways can help**
- **Civil legal aid general information**
- **Legal issues in a disaster**
- **Ways to prepare before a disaster hits**
- **Examples of past severe weather events that legal aid has responded to**

Minnesota Aging Pathways is excited to partner with Justice North Civil Legal Aid to share information about disaster preparedness. Join us as we kick off Severe Weather Awareness Week (April 13 – 17), so you can be prepared should a disaster strike.

Presenters:

**Kayla Niedzieski,
Disaster Project Coordinator
Justice North**

**Anne Larson,
Outreach Specialist
Minnesota Aging Pathways**



[Register Here](#)



Medicare can be complicated, but Minnesota Aging Pathways is here to help. Whether you've been on Medicare for a few years and just need a refresher, or you're brand new to Medicare, Medicare 101 will help you understand the basics so you can manage your health care options.



Minnesota Aging Pathways assists the older adults to remain in their homes or return to their home from a facility by providing free in-depth support. Resource coordination and ongoing follow-ups promote long-term success in the community, while offering guidance and support to family members and caregivers.

**3rd Thursday of each month
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Virtual - Zoom**

To register call MN aging Pathways at (800) 333-2433 or click the link below:

Medicare 101

**3rd Tuesday of each month
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Virtual - Zoom**

To register call MN aging Pathways at (800) 333-2433 or click the link below:

Resource Coordination

Below is a link to listings of other available presentations we can offer. If your agency is interested in hosting an in person or virtual presentation, please reach out to Anne Larson, Outreach Specialist, at alarson@nwrdc.org.

Additional Presentations

Learn More About Medicare Savings Programs:

Medicare Savings Programs	Benefit	Financial Eligibility 2025-2026 (single/couple)	
		Monthly income	Resources
Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB)	Part A & B premiums, deductibles, cost-sharing	\$1,325/\$1,784* 100% FPL	\$10,000/\$18,000
Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB)	Part B premium	\$1,585/\$2,135* 101 to 120% FPL	\$10,000/\$18,000
Qualifying Individual (QI)	Part B premium	\$1,781/\$2,400* 121 to 135% FPL	\$10,000/\$18,000

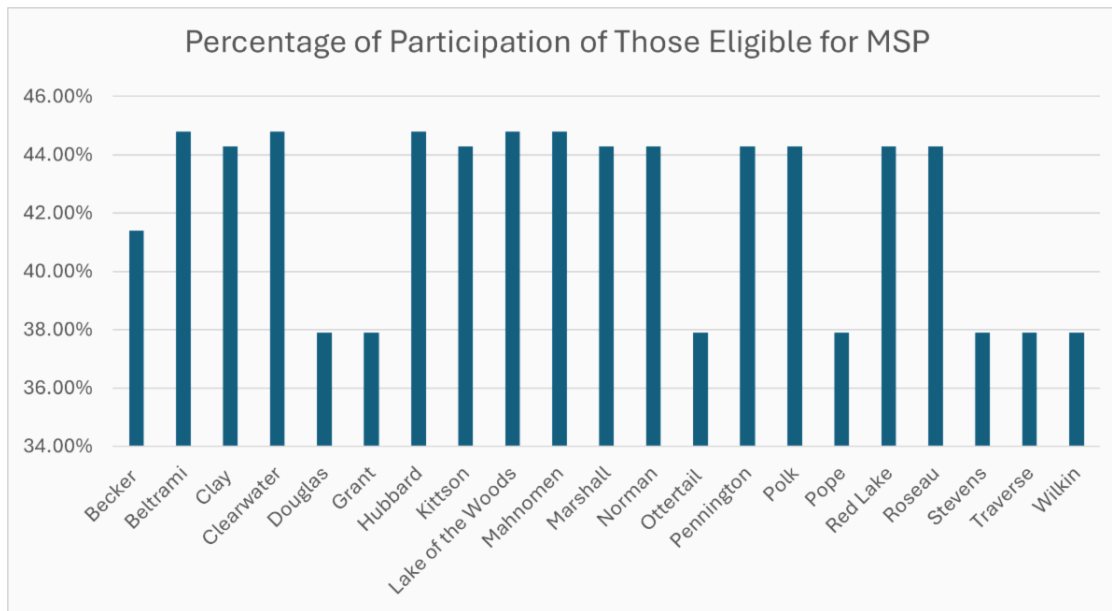
* Includes a \$20 standard income disregard.

Are you struggling to pay your Part A or Part B premiums every month? You may qualify for a Medicare Savings Program (MSP). MSPs are programs that can help pay your Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and/or Part B (Medical Insurance) premiums. Depending on which MSP you may qualify for, it might also pay your Part A and Part B deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments. You can apply for Medicare Savings Programs through your local county social services office. Based on your income/resources, the county will determine which program you may qualify for.

MSPs are unutilized in Northwest Minnesota. Below is a chart showing the income/asset limits to qualify, as well as a chart that shows what percentage of eligible individuals are utilizing MSPs in our service area. For more information on MSPs, call Minnesota Aging Pathways at 1-800-333-2433 or contact your local county social services.

*Above is a chart showing the income/asset limits to qualify.

*Below is a chart that shows the percentage of individuals who are eligible and are utilizing a Medicare Savings Program.



*Data collected from National Council on Aging

Additional information on MSPs can be found here:

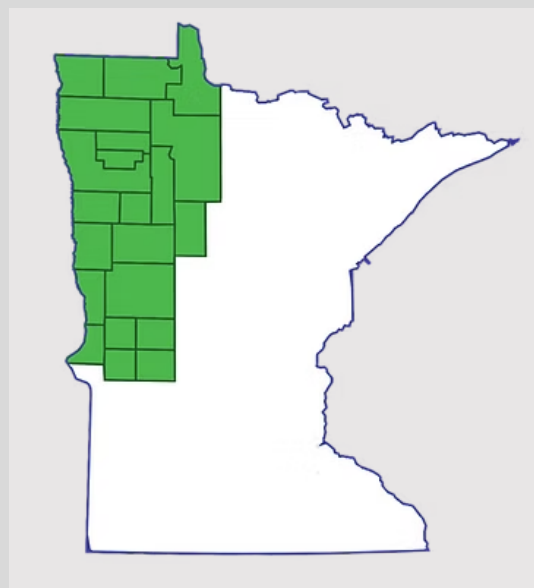
<https://my.aarpfoundation.org/article/how-to-apply-for-medicare-savings/>

<https://www.medicare.gov/basics/costs/help/medicare-savings-programs>

https://www.ncoa.org/benefits-participation-map?sourceid=1108749&ids=27000&ceid=12330213&emdi=7cb15b13-b981-ef11-8474-6045bda8aae9&utm_medium=email&program=msp&emci=70a8c195-1f80-ef11-8474-6045bda8aae9&utm_campaign=100324&utm_source=newsletter

Dancing Sky Board

- David Meyer**, Becker County
- John Carlson, Beltrami County
- David Ebinger, Clay County
- Mark Larson, Clearwater County
- Jerry Rapp, Douglas County
- Bill Lavalley, Grant County
- Tom Krueger, Hubbard County
- Theresa Gillie, Kittson County
- Cody Hasbargen, LO Woods County
- Karen Ahmann***, Mahnomen County
- Jim Duckstad*, Marshall County
- Jesse Lee, Norman County
- Robert Lahman, Otter Tail County
- Eugene Smith, Otter Tail County
- Dave Sorenson, Pennington County
- Paul Reese, Polk County
- Larry Lindor, Pope County
- Anthony Flage, Red Lake County
- Glenda Phillipe, Roseau County
- Patricia Lesmeister-Nelson, Stevens



Special Interest Group

- Dr Sue Humphers Ginther, Gerontology
- Tammy Carlsrud, Public Health
- Amy Ballard, Social Services
- Michelle Fischer, Social Services

Jerrel Olson, Traverse County
Dennis Larson, Wilkin County

John Nelson, Older Adult
Dale Rollie, Older Adult
Bryan McCoy, Transportation

*****Chairperson**
****Vice Chair**
***1st Vice Chair**

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