

Volume 3 | September, 2026



Fall 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.

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A Message for the Season

As summer gives way to fall, many of us find ourselves settling back into routines and preparing for the changes that come with cooler weather and shorter days. The season reminds us that change is a natural part of life, and aging is no different. While each stage of life brings new opportunities and challenges, it also brings wisdom, resilience, and the chance to focus on what helps us thrive.



Fall is also a good time to think about our health, safety, and well-being. Whether that means staying active to reduce the risk of falls, reviewing Medicare coverage during open enrollment, finding support as a caregiver, enjoying healthy meals, or preparing our homes for winter, small steps today can make a big difference in the months ahead.

At DSAAA, we are fortunate to partner with communities throughout our region to provide programs and services that help older adults remain healthy, independent, and engaged. Through funding from the Older Americans Act and the Minnesota Board on Aging, we are able to support a wide range of resources that benefit older adults, family caregivers, and communities alike.

As you explore this issue, I hope you find information, resources, and opportunities that are meaningful to you or someone you care about. Thank you for being part of a community that values aging well and supports people in living with dignity, purpose, and connection.

Wishing you a safe, healthy, and enjoyable autumn season.

Judi Weiss – Dancing Sky Grants Manager



Medicare Open Enrollment

Plan today for a healthier tomorrow!

Fall means more than changing leaves — it's also time to take a fresh look at your Medicare coverage!

Medicare Open Enrollment runs from **October 15 through December 7**. During this time, people with Medicare can review their current health and prescription drug coverage and make changes for 2027.

Even if you're happy with your current coverage, it's worth taking a few minutes to review your plan. **Plans can change from year to year — and so can your health care needs.**

Mark Your Calendar!

**OCTOBER 15 –
DECEMBER 7, 2026**

Make your Medicare coverage choices for 2027.

Your Medicare Open Enrollment Checklist

- ☒ **Are my medications still covered?**
Check your plan's 2027 drug list and costs.
- ☒ **Is my pharmacy still in-network?**
Using a preferred pharmacy may save you money.
- ☒ **Are my doctors and hospitals still in-network?**
This is especially important with Medicare Advantage plans.
- ☒ **Have my costs changed?**
Review premiums, deductibles, copays and other out-of-pocket expenses.
- ☒ **Do I need different coverage?**
Think about changes in your health, prescriptions or medical needs.
- ☒ **Have I read my Annual Notice of Change?**
Your plan sends this each fall to explain what will be different in the coming year.

What Can You Change?

During Medicare Open Enrollment, you may be able to:

- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan.
- Switch from a Medicare Advantage Plan back to Original Medicare.
- Change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to another.
- Join, switch or drop a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.

Changes made during Open Enrollment generally take effect **January 1, 2027**.

Need Help?

You Don't Have to Figure It Out Alone!

Minnesota¹ Aging Pathways offers free, unbiased assistance to Medicare beneficiaries and their families. Trained specialists can help you understand Medicare, review your options and compare plans.

 **Minnesota Aging Pathways**
800-333-2433

A little time spent reviewing your Medicare coverage this fall could help you find coverage that better fits your health care needs — and your budget — in 2027.

PEOPLE • COMMUNITIES • POSSIBILITIES

Staff Updates

Welcome Kate Mudge, our MSW intern who will be working with the EDP team.

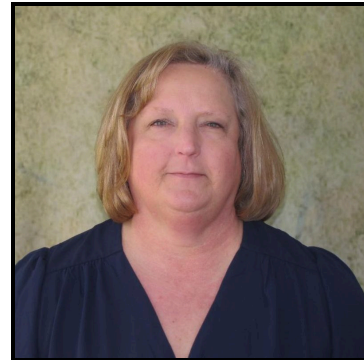


Kate is a transformational nonprofit leader with more than 20 years of experience guiding organizations and initiatives through growth, change, and impact. Known for visionary leadership, systems thinking, and the ability to connect diverse partners to create lasting social, environmental, and community transformation. Skilled in strategy, fundraising, storytelling, and movement building at both local and national levels.

"Dancing Sky is of particular interest to me because of your focus on supporting older adults in rural communities. I live on a farm in Otter Tail County, and my long-term goal is to operate a care farm that supports seniors. I am especially eager to learn more about how to help older adults remain in their homes while maintaining autonomy and control over their choices."

New Role:

Kathy Hansen will be transitioning to the Quality Assurance Supervisor position. The Quality Assurance Supervisor role ensures that services provided by Minnesota Aging Pathways staff are consistent statewide and meet established standards for quality, compliance and client satisfaction. Kathy has been a Resource Specialist with the Minnesota Aging Pathways team for the past 3 years.



Welcome to our new and returning Volunteers:

Each Fall during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, we have the pleasure of assisting many of our Minnesota Seniors to review their health and drug coverage benefits. This year we are proud to have Dale Rollie, Joyce McIntosh, and Kris Hammer join our team during this very busy season.

Past Events

USAging Answers on Aging 51st Annual Conference and Trade Show



Heather and Mary from the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging recently attended the US Aging conference in San Diego. Mary received an award with the metro AAA staff and Heather presented with AAAA and Metro AAA and the WRAPS project!

[Full Article](#)

Red Lake Community Health Services - Grand Reopening Founded in Memory of Carrie Estey



DSAAA hosted a booth at this Open House June 15, 2026

This event was more than an open house. The celebration featured a landscape mural project by Kent Estey, music by Mitch Walking Elk, Redbears frybread, a mobile crisis medical unit, and a Team Carrie raffle/fundraiser benefiting cancer patients. Visitors could meet Community Health Workers and learn about services available through the new Bemidji office.

Minnesota County Tour on

Dementia and Dementia Care

Dr. Gaugler is on a statewide tour with the goal of visiting all of Minnesota's 87 counties. Approximately each month, Dr. Gaugler will visit a different county in Minnesota to provide education and hold conversations related to Alzheimer's disease and dementia. These events will offer the opportunity for Minnesotans and others to engage more fully in the outreach initiatives occurring at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Gaugler will also invite local community partners to participate and share resources at these events. The Minnesota County Tour on Dementia and Dementia Care is based on an "outward-facing" approach that directly engages with communities to maximize the public health impact of the Families and LTC Projects.



DSAAA was represented at both the Fergus Falls and Perham events this summer and will also have a presence at the upcoming Pope County event.



***County Fair
Senior Days We
Participated In
This Summer***



- **Becker County**
- **Douglas County**
- **Norman County**
- **West Otter Tail County**
- **Hubbard County**
- **East Otter Tail County**
- **Marshall County**



Upcoming Classes and Events



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 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

Do you have Concerns About Falling?

Please Join Us for A Matter of Balance Class!

Every Monday,
starting Sept. 14- Nov. 2nd
8:30-10:30 AM

RiverView Health Conference Room 3
323 S. Minnesota St
Crookston, MN 56716

*Classes are held once a week for 8 weeks. Each class
will run for 2 hours. There is no cost for this class!*

**To register, call RiverView Rehab Services
at 218-281-9463.**

*This program is made possible through funding from
the Older Americans Act of 1965, under a contract
with the Minnesota Board on Aging.*



**A MATTER OF
BALANCE**

MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

Many older adults experience concerns
about falling and restrict their activities.

A Matter of Balance is an award-winning
program designed to manage falls and
increase activity levels.

**This program emphasizes
practical strategies to
manage falls.**

You Will Learn To:

- View falls as controllable
- Set goals for increasing activity
- Make changes to reduce fall risks at home
- Exercise to increase strength and balance

Who Should Attend?

- Anyone who has fallen in the past and is concerned about falling again
- Anyone interested in improving balance, flexibility and strength
- Anyone who has restricted activities because of falling concerns



Dancing Sky
Area Agency on Aging

A program of the Northwest Regional Development Commission

FREE ESTATE PLANNING



LEGAL CLINIC



LEGACY LINKS

-  Estate planning services for income-eligible homeowners.
-  Protect your wishes, your family, and your home.
-  Meet one-on-one with a pro bono attorney to get help with essential estate planning documents.



Health Care Directives
Powers of Attorney
Wills

Wednesday, Sept. 16
Fergus Falls, MN

Call 218-322-6035

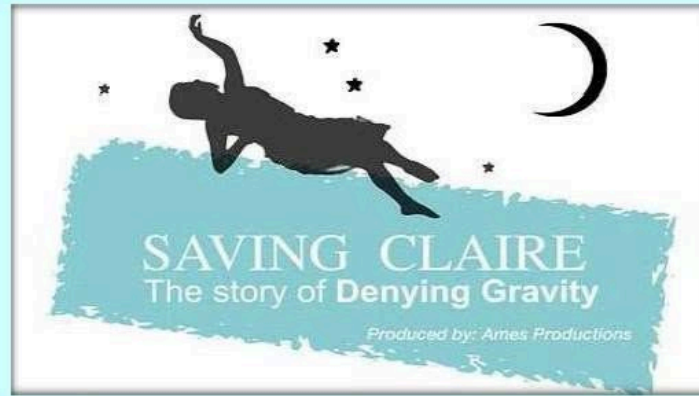
to apply for the Legacy Links Pro Bono Estate Planning Clinic*

justice north
CIVIL LEGAL AID

Clinic space is limited, and appointments are scheduled based on the date of your application. Apply today to secure your spot!

*Please note this number is only for applications to the Legacy Links Clinic. All other legal aid applicants must call the main Justice North number (877-696-6529) or apply online at justicenorth.org.

justicenorth.org



Dancing Sky AAA is excited to share this special private screening of the groundbreaking documentary "Saving Claire", it is a documentary using storytelling and grass-roots outreach to engage, empower and improve health & wellness outcomes by preventing falls.

We will have a discussion that will include individuals with the expertise in:

- Occupational Therapies
- Pharmacy & Medications
- Fire Department Responses

Join us as we watch this groundbreaking documentary!

Thursday- September 17th at 11am

This is an online event, to register:

[Eventbrite Registration](#)

For questions or special accommodations contact:

*Stephanie Aasness,
Development Team
Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
stephanie@nwrdc.org or 320-766-1856*



Registration Link



LSS CAREGIVER SUPPORT & RESPITE SERVICES

Community Care Group Respite Open House



First Lutheran Church

402 South Court Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Thursday, September 17
1-3 p.m.

Learn about our service that provides a much-needed break for caregivers or about becoming a volunteer.

Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but it can also be exhausting. Join us to learn about Community Care Group Respite, a welcoming service that provides social engagement for older adults while giving family caregivers a break to rest and re-charge.

Whether you're a caregiver looking for support or someone interested in volunteering, we'd love to meet you!

Questions? Contact Us

218.203.7312

Jim.McKinstra@lssmn.org



@LSSCaregiverSupport



LSS Caregiver Support & Respite Services receives funding from the Federal Older Americans Act through an award from the MNRAAA, DSAAA and CMCOA under an Area Plan approved by the Minnesota Board on Aging.

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ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT CAN BE DONE



Monday, September 28, 2026

Presented by Joseph Gaugler, PhD



Dr. Gaugler is the Robert L. Kane Endowed Chair in Long-Term Care and Aging and a Professor at the University of Minnesota. His work focuses on the best way to support families and professionals who care for persons with memory loss. He aims to improve the health and well-being of carers through innovative programs and technologies.



Join us at two locations:

Free to attend! Identical presentations at each.

Resource tables hosted by community organizations available.

Starbuck Community Center

10:00 - 11:30am | 307 E 5th St, Starbuck, MN 56381

Registration encouraged! Call Blenda at 218-685-8207.

Glenwood United Parish

2:00 - 3:30pm | 10 17th Ave NW, Glenwood, MN 56334

**No pre-registration needed.*

Questions? Contact Ashley Millenbah, mill8913@umn.edu

**SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

WESTERN PRAIRIE
HUMAN SERVICES

Dancing Sky
Area Agency on Aging

**GROWING
SERVING
COMMUNITY
LOVE - CARE
COMPASSION IN
THE WORLD**
**FAITH
UNITED
PARISH
GLENWOOD MN**

Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
and Age-Friendly Minnesota present



Northwest Minnesota Age-Friendly Exchange 2026

Connect. Learn. Shape what's next. Explore what an age-inclusive future means for you, your community or your organization. Discover innovative approaches, and collaborate on what comes next in Minnesota.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Explore emergency preparedness as a vital component of age-friendly communities through an interactive scenario exercise.
- Learn from age-friendly communities in the NW region as they share experiences, ideas, and lessons learned.
- Hear what Age-Friendly Minnesota has been working on and network with others.



Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Northwest Technical College
905 Grant Ave SE
Bemidji, MN

9:00am: Breakfast and Registration

9:30am–3:00pm: Event

**Register by Mon., Oct. 19, 2026.
Space is limited!**

*Free to attend and includes
breakfast and lunch with
registration.*

Registration open!

Scan the QR code or visit [Eventbrite](#) to learn more and register.



To request reasonable accommodations, contact Stephanie Aasness at 320.766.1856 or stephanie@nwrdc.org by Oct. 9., 2026.



Dancing Sky
Area Agency on Aging

AGE FRIENDLY
minnesota

This year's Regional Exchanges also include a **virtual, statewide conference** on **Tues., Oct. 27, 2026!** Visit <https://bit.ly/AFRE2026> for more information and to register for this free event.

More Information



Sign up today
z.umn.edu/HAM2026

Choose from over 30 free webinars on topics like:

- ☒ Financial health, estate planning and fraud protection
- ☒ Mental wellbeing and brain health
- ☒ Nutrition and food safety
- ☒ Physical safety and independent living
- ☒ Relationship and community building

 UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION

#HealthyAgingMonth

September is Healthy Aging Month, celebrating the positive aspects of aging and exploring ways to enhance the wellbeing of older individuals.

Healthy aging encompasses maintaining and improving physical, mental, spiritual, financial, and social health.

Available Webinar Classes

The population of older adults in the U.S. is steadily increasing, and people are living longer than ever before. Our minds and bodies undergo countless changes as we age, but embracing a healthy lifestyle can help us navigate through these transformations with grace and vigor. Not only does it have the power to ward off potential health issues, but it also allows us to get every drop of joy and fulfillment from our lives. It is possible to live a vibrant and full life at any age.

Volunteerism is defined as the policy or practice of volunteering one's time or talents for charitable, educational, or other worthwhile activities, especially in one's community.



Volunteering offers enormous benefits to individuals, vital help to people in need, worthwhile causes, and the community as a whole.

We offer volunteer opportunities to fit your interests.

We understand how valuable volunteers are, will provide the training and support you need to achieve your volunteer goals with us! Some opportunities include outreach presenter, outreach exhibitor, and Medicare counseling.

If you'd like to volunteer call the Minnesota Aging Pathways today – (800) 333-2433 or fill out the online form.

[Apply Here](#)



We are pleased to introduce our new Electric Golf Cart Ride Service in Warren, Minnesota! This project was made possible through a grant secured by the Northwest Regional Development Commission, in partnership with Warren Supporting Our Seniors.



Community Connections

Need a Ride Around Town?

 **Call 218-684-3164**

Free Rides Available 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Day of Operation: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday

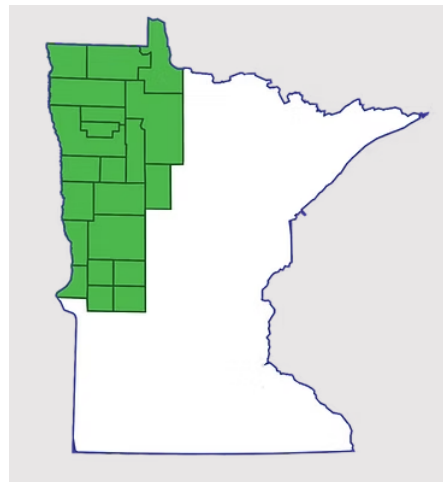
Community Connections is here to help




"It's wonderful to hear about the positive impact the community golf cart has had on the residents' lives. The ability to participate in various activities such as touring Warren, enjoying the flowers, and attending community events, truly enhances their quality of life. The comfort provided by the golf cart, especially for ambulatory residents, is invaluable." – North Star Manor

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
 Theresia Gillie, Kittson County
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Special Interest Group

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 Gerontology
 Tammy Carlsrud, Public Health
 Amy Ballard, Social Services
 Michelle Fischer, Social Services
 John Nelson, Older Adult
 Dale Rollie, Older Adult
 Bryan McCoy, Transportation

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