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STAFF

Matt FowlerExecutive Director
Kae Turco....Volunteer Coordinator
Brenda Canedy.....Client Resource
Coordinator
Anissa Wilson...Intake Coordinator
Diana Palmer.....Office Assistant

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HOURS

MONDAY - FRIDAY
8:30AM - 4:30PM

OUR MISSION

TO SIMPLIFY THE LIVES OF
SENIORS BY ENABLING THEM
TO MAKE INFORMED
DECISIONS REGARDING THEIR
BENEFITS

www.vas-nebraska.org
402-444-6617



VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING SENIORS

WINTER 2022

Medicare Annual Open Enrollment is over, but you can review Medicare Advantage Plans through March

Medicare's 2021 Annual Open Enrollment Period ran from October 15th through December 7th. During this time, beneficiaries reviewed/changed their Medicare Advantage or Prescription Drug Plans.

Open Enrollment Impact

In 2021, VAS helped most beneficiaries by phone. Thanks to hard work of our volunteers, VAS helped 1404 people save \$850 thousand by switching to a new plan.

Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment

If you are currently on a Medicare Advantage plan, you have an opportunity to change to a different Medicare Advantage plan or Prescription Drug Plan from January 1—March 31, during the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment period (MA OE).

If you would like help reviewing your Medicare Advantage plan, please contact VAS at (402) 444-6617.

VAS Provides Help for Homestead Exemption Filers

The Nebraska Homestead Exemption program offers eligible property owners reduced property taxes. To determine eligibility, a property owner must complete and submit the Nebraska Homestead Exemption application to your county's Assessor Office before June 30.

Do I qualify?

You may qualify for reduced property taxes if you own and occupy your home on or before January 1 of 2022 and qualify

- Persons 65 or older before January
- Qualified disabled individuals
- Qualified disabled veterans and their

widow(er)s). [\(Click for details\)](#).

Some categories have limits on income and home value.

Last year VAS helped 657 homeowners with their applications for an estimated savings of over \$1.6 million in property tax relief, an average savings of \$2,495 per homeowner.



VAS will be helping homeowners

complete Homestead Exemption applications this year. Please call VAS at 402-444-6617 after March 1 to schedule a phone appointment with one of our trained and experienced Homestead volunteers.



*“I thought
the dryer was
shrinking my
clothes.
Turns out it
was the
refrigerator
all along.”*

- Anonymous

VAS Welcomes Executive Director Matt Fowler

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Rev. Dr. F. Matt Fowler has been selected as Executive Director to replace Sue Fredricks who retired on December 31 after 13 years as VAS Executive Director. Matt comes to VAS after serving the United Methodist Church for 26 years. His most recent focus was expanding the contacts, relationships, education, and funds received by the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation. In accomplishing this he has been in nearly all of Nebraska’s counties.

The search committee found Matt to display a strong appreciation for our mission. It also recognized Dr. Fowler’s deep understanding of helping people wherever they are in the journey of life. He will continue our culture of educating

all with grace, kindness and mercy. Matt believes that VAS fulfills an important role in people’s lives, and that there is opportunity to expand our services further.

Matt is from Kearney and earned his Bachelors degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University. He earned his Masters and PHD from Southern Methodist University.

The search committee believes that Matt’s fund-raising experience as well as his understanding of obtaining donor contributions, increasing outreach, and working with staff and volunteers will be a tremendous asset to VAS. He appreciates that there is a learning curve regarding the details of SHIP counseling. The board is confident that with our staff and volunteers he will lead VAS to expand its service and outreach.

2022 Medicare Premiums and Costs

Medicare Premiums

Part A

- \$0 / month for those with 40 quarters or more of Medicare-covered employment
- \$274 / month for those with 30—39 quarters of Medicare-covered employment
- \$499 / month for those with fewer than 30 quarters of Medicare-covered employment

Part B

- \$170.10/ month for most
- Those who are subject to the ‘hold harmless’ provision will pay less, as the increase in the Social Security benefits will not be large enough to cover the increased Part B premium.
- Those with higher incomes will have higher monthly premiums or IRMAA—

Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount.

Part D

- Those with higher incomes will have an extra amount to pay for their Part D plan or IRMAA—Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount.

Medicare Costs for Services

Part A

Inpatient Hospital

- \$1,556 deductible / benefit period
- \$0 / day for days 1-60
- \$389 / day for days 61-90
- \$778 / day for days 91-150

Skilled Nursing Facility

- \$0 / day for days 1-20
- \$194.50 / day for days 21-100

Part B

- \$233 annual deductible
- 20% of Medicare approved amount

Medicare and COVID-19 Vaccine

Medicare covers the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost to you. Medicare covers the vaccine for anyone 5 and older who has Medicare due to their age, a disability, End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), or ALS (also called Lou Gehrig's disease). Be sure to bring your Medicare card.

Medicare covers a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot at no cost to you. You can get a booster from the same COVID-19 vaccine that you originally got, or choose a different one.

- If you got a Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, you can get a booster shot at least 5 months after you complete your second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines.
- If you got a Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, you can get a booster shot at least 2 months after you got your first shot.
- [Learn more about who should get a booster shot.](#)

If you're immunocompromised (like people who have had an organ transplant and are at risk for infections and other diseases), Medicare will cover an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, at least 28 days after a second dose, at no cost to you. Note: Don't mix vaccines. If your first two doses were Pfizer, your third dose should also be Pfizer. If your first two doses were Moderna, your third dose should also be Moderna.

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.

[Get details about the vaccine.](#)

If you have Medicare and have a disability or face other challenges in getting to a location away from home for a vaccination, Medicare will pay a doctor or other care provider to give you the COVID-19 vaccine in your home. You may need to give them your Medicare Number for billing, but there's still no cost to you for the vaccine and its administration.

[Get details about the vaccine at home.](#)

If you paid to get a COVID-19 vaccine When you get a COVID-19 vaccine, your provider can't charge you for an office visit or other fee if the vaccine is the only medical service you get. If you get other medical services at the same time you get the COVID-19 vaccine, you may owe a copayment or deductible for those services.

If you paid a fee or got a bill for a COVID-19 vaccine, [get information on how to understand these charges.](#)

If you think your provider incorrectly charged you for the COVID-19 vaccine, ask them for a refund. If you received charges but the only service you got was a COVID-19 vaccine, report your provider to the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services by calling 1-800-HHS-TIPS or visiting [TIPS.HHS.GOV](https://www.tips.hhs.gov).



[Find a Vaccine Near Me](#)

Get Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 4 free at-home COVID-19 tests. The tests are completely free. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days.

Order your tests now so you have them when you need them.

If you need a COVID-19 test now, please see [other testing resources](#) for free testing locations in your area.

[Order Free At-Home Tests](#)

The tests available for order:

- Are rapid antigen at-home tests, not PCR
- Can be taken anywhere
- Give results within 30 minutes (no lab drop-off required)
- Work whether or not you have COVID-19 symptoms
- Work whether or not you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccines
- Are also referred to as self-tests or over-the-counter (OTC) tests

[Read more frequently asked questions](#)

Many Thanks to Executive Director Sue Fredricks

Sue's VAS tenure began October 1, 2008, at the start of Medicare open enrollment. The VAS office consisted of 3 small offices and a multipurpose storage/counseling/break room. Enrollment events were conducted in the ENOA basement training room and was first come, first served. VAS helped about 3600 individuals achieve approximately \$500,000 savings. During the next years, Sue coordinated VAS' office expansion into an adjacent space, doubling its size, trained Americorps members to assist VAS members during open enrollment, and expanded the Homestead Exemption Assistance Program.

She also created New-to-Medicare class materials and curriculum, provided new to Medicare education to groups and businesses, expanded the classes for court appointed conservators. Open Enrollment and Homestead

Assistance sessions were placed on an appointment basis and a second office was added specifically for handling increasingly complicated program needs.

Later in her tenure, VAS moved again into its existing office space, allowing for more in-office counseling. Pre-Covid assistance was provided to over 6600 clients and a savings of over \$3,000,000, a six-fold increase in ten years.

Sue became the "go-to" person for the counselors and would apply her Special Education Teaching skills to assist clients

whose issues were very complex. She was always available to help with other problems and her interpersonal skills and demeanor will be missed by all.

Thank
You

A Message from Outgoing Executive Director, Sue Fredricks

The past thirteen years have flown by and it's because I have really enjoyed working for Volunteers Assisting Seniors. From a board of directors that have remained loyal to the mission and vision of VAS, to staff members who have become like extended family, and the many, many seniors that I have had the pleasure to get to know, I can unequivocally say this has been the most challenging and rewarding job of my career.

It is my sincere hope that Matt, the new Executive Director, finds the same fulfillment working for VAS that I have experienced. In the short time I have had to work with him, I feel confident turning the reigns over to him.

He will be able to move VAS forward while keeping the vision and mission of the organization as the primary goal. Plus, his sense of humor will help when those interesting calls come in asking for College World Series tickets or any other odd requests that the name "Volunteers Assisting Seniors" seems to attract.

It is with a mix of sadness and excitement that I begin my next stage of life, but I will always look back at my time at VAS with fond memories and the knowledge that I worked for a great organization.

- Sue Fredricks



Upcoming Events

VAS will be begin offering in-person New-to-Medicare evening classes in April. Please [click here](#) or call VAS at 402-444-6617 to find out more and to make a reservation.