

ANNUAL REPORT

St. Joseph County
Commission on Aging

2024





From the Director

Greetings!

As I look back on 2024 and what the Commission on Aging provided to older adults in St. Joseph County, I am incredibly proud of the work our agency did to serve, protect and support some of the most vulnerable people in our community. In addition to helping seniors receive nutritious meals or help in their home so they could remain independent, we also operate two centers that offer a wide range of programs to help keep older adults in our community healthy and engaged.

Studies show that seniors with strong social connections and community engagement often experience better physical and mental health outcomes, including reduced risk of chronic diseases and improved cognitive function. The Commission on Aging plays an essential role in providing seniors with a place to go to make those strong social connections. We offer close to two dozen exercise classes at our centers each week, in addition to arts and crafts, lectures, health screenings, card games and so much more.

As you read through this report, you will see that whether it is providing food to seniors who would struggle to prepare a meal on their own, or offering an aide to help a senior take a shower and have a clean house to live in, or an enrichment center where a senior can go to talk to other seniors, eat lunch and play a card game, the Commission on Aging is providing older adults in our community with the support they need to stay healthy, safe and independent.

Pam Riley
Executive Director



Nutrition Services

The Nutrition Department had a fun-filled year of special celebrations for seniors who came to eat at our centers, and for those who received home-delivered meals.

Some ways we blended nutrition and activities at the centers were with themed desserts and other fun food items such as chocolate chip cookies and ice cream during Women's History Month, kerosene pickles for Ron Howard's birthday, a cookout for Older Americans Month, and much more. Our seniors were happy to learn that it was women who invented chocolate chip cookies and the ice cream maker.

The Nutrition Department also provided the food for several special celebrations such as the Volunteer Breakfast, the Summer Picnic, the Water Festival Luncheon, the Holiday Party, and Dogs and Donuts, just to name a few.

Presentations were made at both centers on nutrition topics, such as cooking with grains, and included samples and recipes to allow the seniors the opportunity to taste things they might not have a great deal of familiarity with, while also giving them education about the health benefits of eating particular foods.

The COA received the Community Agency of the Year Award from the St. Joseph County Intermediate School District's Parent Advisory Committee for its work with YATC. Throughout the school year the COA welcomed students in the program to help pack item for Meals on Wheels and perform a multitude of tasks commonly performed in commercial kitchens to help develop their job skills.

In 2024 the Nutrition Department served more than 200,000 meals. Approximately 550 seniors at our centers and almost 500 seniors received home delivered meals. About 1,700 seniors participated in our restaurant program, which is a program where the seniors can purchase up to three coupons each month for a suggested donation of \$5.00 to eat at area restaurants. This ensures seniors have an opportunity to receive much needed socialization.

Many of the seniors who receive meals in the home are socially isolated. Groups of volunteers from the Young Adult Transitions Center, Immaculate Conception School and Girls on the Run from Andrews Elementary created cards and assembled treats that were distributed to our Meals on Wheels recipients on a regular basis, which let them know that they are important to us and we care about their well-being.



Katie Hughes

Nutrition Services Manager

Residential Services



Residential Services at the COA saw a slight decrease in 2024. The COA served 157 vulnerable adults in St. Joseph County, providing a total of 8,758 hours for homemaking, personal care and respite care services. In serving the most vulnerable adults in St. Joseph County, homemaking services were found to be the most needed service in 2024 with a total of 7,606 hours for this year. Respite care to caregivers was utilized for 587 hours and personal care for 555 hours. The COA held an average staff of 12 in-home aides during 2024 and dropped to 8 active aides later in the year. As a result, the program was able to manage an ongoing waitlist of clients requesting services. The COA also provided chore services to clients through a part time chore worker to help seniors with heavier duty chores in their homes such as yardwork, installing grab bars and small handy-man tasks. This program utilized 32 hours in the year 2024.

The apartments at the Rivers Enrichment Center have remained a valuable resource to our community. During 2024, there was a turnover of ten apartments, which were able to be filled from a robust waiting list within a few short days. Interest in senior housing at Rivers Residences remains strong, with our waiting list continuing to grow - reflecting a consistent and vested demand within the community. We experience a steady stream of seniors scheduling tours and joining our list with genuine enthusiasm and intent to make Rivers their home. The apartment community itself continues to thrive, fostering close-knit relationships among residents. Daily gatherings for coffee, conversation, games, potlucks, and social events illustrate the deep sense of connection and belonging shared among our residents.

Participation in COA programs remains high, with many residents actively engaging in enrichment activities offered right within the building. This unique integration of housing and enrichment creates a dynamic environment that supports both social engagement and well-being without the need to leave home.

Rivers Enrichment Center and Residences continues to serve as a cornerstone for senior living in our county. We are proud of the meaningful impact we've made in the lives of our residents and look forward to continued growth, community engagement, and excellence in senior care.

Nicole Notestine

Residential Services Manager

Life Enrichment



Our members enjoyed a wide range of activities in 2024 to help keep them healthy, active and engaged. The highlights of 2024 include our annual summer picnic as well as our holiday party. Both events drew more than 150 participants. Throughout the year there were many other events our members enjoyed in addition to the daily programming we offer such as exercise classes, cards and games, crafts and more.

We celebrated Women's History Month with lectures from local historians, we celebrated National Pretzel Day with warm soft pretzels for our seniors to enjoy, and we celebrated Older Americans Month with a cookout provided by the Nutrition Department followed by an afternoon of fun games. This is just a small sampling of the special days we celebrated throughout the year with games and other activities, guest speakers and special treats.

Our trip program was very popular with 44 trips offered in 2024 and almost 200 seniors who participated in at least one trip. This represents a 50 percent increase in the number of trips offered in 2023. We visited the Henderson Castle in Kalamazoo, the University of Notre Dame in South Bend and Meadowbrook Hall in Rochester Hills. One of the highlights of the year was an outing to see the Detroit Tigers. More than two dozen seniors enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at the ballpark.

In June the COA offered a special dinner and presentation called *Mrs. Kelly's Journey Home* that shed a spotlight on the stress of caregiving, especially when your loved one has dementia. The event featured professional speaker, author and storyteller Breeda Miller and drew 180 people.

In 2024, the COA offered 30,000 hours of activities at its centers in Sturgis and Three Rivers. More than 1,300 individuals visited our centers, resulting in almost 52,000 sign-ins to exercise classes, Bingo, crafts, educational presentations & more.

The COA offered more than 2,000 hours of exercise classes at its centers in 2024. Several of the classes receive grant funding to help offset the cost of our instructors' salaries. Those classes are classified as Evidence Based Disease Prevention programs and help combat the effects of arthritis exercise or lower the risk of falling.

One area we saw a significant increase in usage at both our centers is the fitness rooms. For members who might not want to participate in a group exercise class, our fitness rooms feature a variety of equipment for seniors to use to help keep them healthy and fit.

Ruth Mancina

Marketing & Life Enrichment Manager



Life Enrichment at the COA

Helping Seniors Stay Fit, Active & Engaged



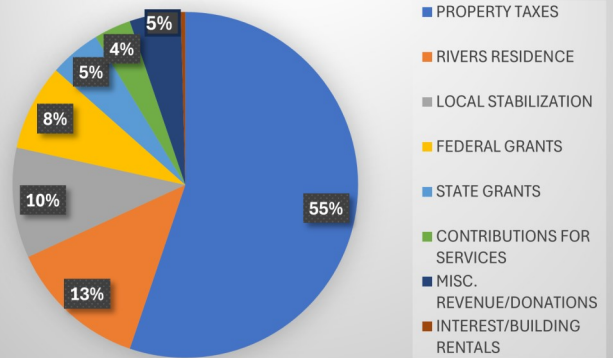
2024 Budget

St. Joseph County Commission on Aging

Revenues

PROPERTY TAXES	1,835,931	55%
RIVERS RESIDENCE	430,861	13%
LOCAL STABILIZATION	342,930	10%
FEDERAL GRANTS	268,002	8%
STATE GRANTS	159,785	5%
CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SERVICES	114,913	3%
MISC. REVENUE/DONATIONS	159,329	5%
INTEREST/BUILDING RENTALS	13,960	0%
3,325,711	100%	

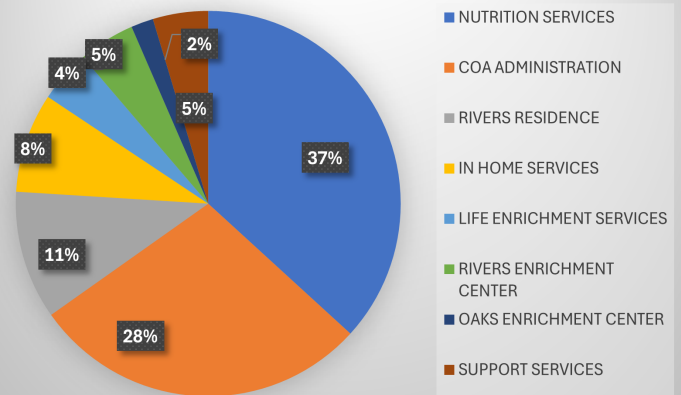
Where the money comes from...



Expenditures

NUTRITION SERVICES	1,134,588	37%
COA ADMINISTRATION	877,137	28%
RIVERS RESIDENCE	332,518	11%
IN HOME SERVICES	257,731	8%
LIFE ENRICHMENT SERVICES	135,363	4%
RIVERS ENRICHMENT CENTER	146,580	5%
OAKS ENRICHMENT CENTER	57,943	2%
SUPPORT SERVICES	143,227	5%
3,085,086	100%	

Where the money goes...



The federal government's fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30.

Britt Buscher
Finance Manager



COA Advisory Board



Sarah Apwisch*



Timothy Barron**



Terry Conklin**



Pat Dane



Deb Davis



John Gelvin



Phil Kline



George Letts



Kathy Pangle*



Rick Shaffer



Jon Withers*

2024 COA STAFF

Executive Director

Pamela Riley

Nutrition Manager

Katie Hughes

Marketing & Life Enrichment Manager

Ruth Mancina

Residential Services Manager

Nicole Notestine

Finance Manager

Britt Buscher

Life Enrichment Coordinator

Cynthia Batten

Referral/Intake Specialist

Jeanette Cage

In-Home Assessor

Cassie Graber

Three Rivers Receptionist

Ann Happel
Tina Gales

Sturgis Receptionist/Meal Site Coordinator

Diana Hile

Program Assistant

Amy Peebles

Cook

Angie Skeen

Meal Site Coordinator/Kitchen Assistant

Corrina Oberlander

Custodian

Melton Powell

Maintenance

Gary Oberlander

*Sarah Apwisch, Kathy Pangle and Jon Withers resigned in 2024.

**Timothy Barron and Terry Conklin joined the COA Advisory Board in 2024.