



NEWS RELEASE – Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Contact: Jenni Lewis, Community Outreach

1 Acy Avenue, Jackson, OH 45640

Phone: 1.800.582.7277, ext. 224

E-Mail: jlewis@aaa7.org

Area Agency on Aging District 7 Named Recipient of Prestigious Aging Achievement Award from USAging

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) is thrilled to announce that its “Fall-Free Fridays” initiative received a 2024 Aging Achievement Award from USAging, one of the highest honors presented by USAging to its members. Fall-Free Fridays, a partnership with Shawnee State University’s (SSU) Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) Program, was among 22 local aging programs to receive honors during USAging’s 49th Annual Conference and Tradeshow, held recently in Tampa, Florida.

The 2024 USAging Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards, supported by Caregiving.com and Cumulus.care, recognizes USAging’s Area Agency on Aging members that have found new and innovative ways to support older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers as they live in their homes and communities.

“At USAging, we are thrilled to recognize the outstanding achievements of this year’s Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards recipients. Their innovative programs and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of older adults set a high standard for excellence in our field. These initiatives not only enhance the well-being of our aging population but also inspire others to strive for impactful and lasting change in their communities,” said USAging CEO Sandy Markwood.

Starting in Fall of 2020, the AAA7 and the Shawnee State University Occupational Therapy Program collaborated to provide virtual education to the community through a social media livestream called “Fall-Free Fridays” that is broadcast on Facebook. AAA7 hosts the 15-minute livestream and Shawnee State graduate students conduct education on a variety of falls prevention topics. In Spring 2021, due to the success of Fall-Free Fridays, another livestream called “Functional Fridays” was created to focus on driver safety, stroke awareness and managing function in everyday life. Both livestream features provided an opportunity to share helpful falls prevention information to the community in a safe and convenient format and broadened the reach allowing more individuals to benefit from the education presented.

“We are honored to receive recognition from our national association,” said Debbie Gulley, RN, AAA7 Interim Executive Director and Director of Care Management Services. “AAA7 values our ongoing relationship with Shawnee State University. The Fall-Free Fridays initiative allows us to care for our current senior population and provide training and experience for future professionals who will serve the next generation of seniors.

Dr. Sandi Allen, Assistant Professor in the MOT Program at Shawnee State University, stated, “The program has been a unique and meaningful experience for the occupational therapy graduate students

from SSU. This partnership enables them to collaborate with professions from other disciplines to meet the needs of older adults in our community."

Dr. Christine Raber, Interim Dean, College of Health and Human Services at Shawnee State University, shared her appreciation for the partnership and its importance for SSU students. "This innovative program demonstrates our commitment to providing real-world learning experiences and we are very grateful to AAA7 for this opportunity. Dr. Allen's leadership has been key to the success of this initiative."

The 2024 USAging Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards honored traditional and new strategies in a range of categories, including advocacy; agency operations; caregiving; community planning and livable communities; diversity, equity and inclusion; economic security; elder abuse prevention; health-social care integration; healthy aging; home and community-based services; housing and homelessness; kinship and grandfamily support; nutrition; technology; social engagement; transportation and mobility; and workforce development and volunteerism. All winners are highlighted in the USAging Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards Showcase at www.usaging.org.

USAging is the national association representing and supporting the network of Area Agencies on Aging and advocating for the Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Our members help older adults and people with disabilities throughout the United States live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. For more information, visit www.usaging.org and follow @theUSAging on Facebook, X and Instagram.

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. provides services on a non-discriminatory basis. These services are available to help older adults and those with disabilities live safely and independently in their residence of choice through services paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, other federal and state resources, as well as private pay. Those interested in learning more can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 (TTY: 711). Here, individuals can speak directly with a Resource Center Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. Information is also available on www.aaa7.org, or the Agency can be contacted through e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

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The AAA7 received an Aging Achievement Award recently for its Fall-Free Fridays initiative, a partnership with the Shawnee State University Master of Occupational Therapy Program. Pictured at the USAging Innovations and Achievement Awards Luncheon at the USAging Conference in Tampa, FL, recently, are, left from right:

Michael Eidsaune, CEO of Caregiving.com, Sponsor of the Awards Program;

John Byer, Cumulus CEO, Sponsor of the Awards Program;

Teresa Reed-Powell, AAA7 Director of Community Services; Jenni Lewis, AAA7 Director of Community Outreach; and Pam Curtis, President of the Board of Directors, USAging.