

March 2018

## Jonathan Lavin to Retire This October



*Jonathan Lavin*

Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president and CEO, has notified the AgeOptions Board of Directors of his intent to retire on October 31, 2018. This will be his 40th anniversary with AgeOptions and 45th in the field of aging.

Under Jon's direction, AgeOptions has championed the importance of community agencies in the delivery of services for older persons in their communities. He is proud to have contributed to local agencies that offer leadership in such areas as information assistance, care coordination, nutritious meals, adult protective services, caregiver support centers, respite services, in-home care, mobility assistance and general advocacy on behalf of older residents throughout the region.

Jon's leadership has spanned Illinois' senior service history, network and systems including:

- The original development of the care coordination unit function to assure appropriate care planning for frailer older persons
- The hosting of one of the original demonstrations that created the elder abuse and neglect program, an accomplishment that required years of sustained advocacy to assure that the program was funded state-wide
- The vision of a tightly knit community aging service network united in outreach to community residents, including benefit information and enrollment ("The Best Kept Secret")
- The foundation-supported, then state-supported Red Tape Cutters, which offered peer support, individual advocacy and agency commitment to the enrollment and provision of information on public benefits programs

- Assistance to the National Council on Aging to fully develop the BenefitsCheckUp.org web service that has served millions of inquirers with responsive information on their eligibility for real and substantial benefits from governmental sources at the state and federal levels
- One of the first Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) programs in the country, with strong educational and sensitivity awareness to protect Medicare and other health care programs from being undermined by fraud, waste and abuse that would eventually equal denial of service to medically needy older persons
- The development of the first long-term care ombudsman programs for the region
- The commitment of resources to ensure that limited English speaking and culturally isolated older persons receive appropriate communications and support from organizations designed to meet their needs (TCLIP)
- The creation of the National Family Caregiver Support program in the Older Americans Act, joining advocates throughout the nation to ensure the essential support of family in the care of an older loved one was not only recognized, but funded
- Leadership in the statewide initiative to begin the planning for an aging society in municipalities and communities across Illinois

Jon is proud of his role in establishing the renamed AgeOptions (previously the Suburban Area Agency on Aging) as an organization with meaning and support from individual and corporate donors. Fourteen years ago he and Diane Slezak, AgeOptions chief operating officer, led by the Board of Directors, started the *Celebrating Aging* annual fundraisers.

AgeOptions, through Jon's leadership, demonstrates and sustains programs in such areas as:

- Identification of individuals who are able to move from nursing homes to independent living with encouragement and best practice support of Transition Engagement Specialists and Peer Counselors
- Statewide leadership in providing chronic disease and diabetes self-management programs through Illinois Pathways to Health
- Medicare information and advocacy through the Make Medicare Work Coalition (MMW)
- The war against scams and fraud against older victims through iFAST, the Illinois Financial Abuse Specialist Team

- Programs for family caregivers in the community and through their faith with a family caregivers curriculum for sustaining loved ones in need, and Caring Together, Living Better for faith-based caregiving

Over his 45-year career in the field of aging, Jon has witnessed the development of Specialists in Aging positions that look at the demographic realities of an aging society, seek innovative and resourceful responses to older persons' challenges and champion aging in advocacy efforts.

In his professional life Jon has explained at least 40 Area Plans on Aging to hundreds of community residents, overseen the awarding of more than \$350 million to community agencies, worked with hundreds of community organizations and, he points out, has been "supported by the brightest, most committed and best staff anyone could ever have asked for."

Jon has served on the boards of directors of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (receiving their Excellence in Leadership Awards in 1992 and 2017), the National Council on Aging and the American Society on Aging. He has chaired the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging and currently serves as president and chair of the Legislative Committee. In the past two years, he has distributed the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging General Assembly Alerts that documented the impact of the Illinois budget impasse on older persons and their community agencies.

Jon began his career at the City of Chicago Mayor's Office for Senior Centers in early November 1973. He coordinated a national demonstration grant designed to prepare the city for its role in planning and delivering aging services, specifically for nutrition and social services. That demonstration became a major example of how an urban area agency on aging should develop. He also led volunteer and senior employment programs in Chicago prior to joining AgeOptions as executive director in 1978.

Jon and his wife, Robin, live in Skokie.