

THE UPSIDE OF AGING

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello and Happy New Year,



As we begin a new year, I'm honored to share that I am now in my sixth year as Director of the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging. This milestone has prompted me to reflect on the remarkable growth and change we've experienced together - including the celebration of our 50th Anniversary serving Grand Traverse County seniors.

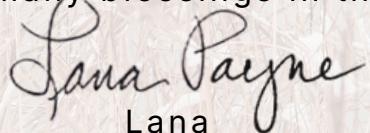
Over the past several years, the COA has expanded both our staff and our programs to better meet the needs of older adults in our community. We relocated to a new, centrally located office and are now proud to share space with the Area Agency on Aging of Northwest Michigan. Most importantly, I am continually grateful for our dedicated staff, whose work helps our clients remain safe, supported, and independent in their homes.

Looking ahead to the next five years, I see exciting growth on the horizon. One significant development is Grand Traverse County's plan to construct a new County Operations Building on LaFranier Road. This facility will include space for our Outdoor Services team, vehicles, and equipment, allowing the COA to add three Outdoor Service Worker positions in the future. This expansion will enable us to serve even more seniors with essential lawn care and snow removal services.

The COA is also collaborating with local partners to address larger, system-wide challenges facing older adults. We are actively exploring new transportation options for seniors, particularly for non-emergency medical appointments. In addition, we are participating in the Grand Traverse Housing Collaborative, which is working to develop a senior home-share network in Northern Michigan. While these initiatives are still in development, I'm encouraged by the strong cooperation among local agencies and the promise of new, much-needed programs for our community.

This year, I will be spending more time out in the community sharing information about the COA and the services we offer. There are still seniors in our area who could benefit from our programs but may not yet know about us. You can help by spreading the word - if the Commission on Aging has made a difference in your life, please share your experience with friends and neighbors and encourage them to reach out.

Wishing you many blessings in the new year,



Lana Payne
Lana

LOOKING TO LEND A HAND?

Volunteers play an important role in helping the Commission on Aging operate efficiently. We are currently seeking volunteers for a monthly, office-based billing task. This is a limited, once-per-month commitment and a meaningful way to support services for local seniors.

Call 231-922-4688 and ask for Renee to learn more.

TAX SEASON IS HERE!

Tax season is underway, and free assistance is available for qualifying seniors through trusted community partners. Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) offers free, IRS-certified tax preparation for community members with incomes of \$100,000 or less. Trained volunteers can assist with federal and state returns, help identify eligible tax credits, and ensure filings are accurate and complete.

To schedule an appointment or learn more, call the Traverse City office at (231) 947-3780 or visit www.nmcaa.net/free-tax-help/.

DEMENTIA CAREGIVER TRAINING - JANUARY SESSION AVAILABLE

Our dementia caregiver trainings are back for 2026. Join licensed professional counselor Laurie Barnes, LPC, for an in-person session designed for those caring for a loved one with dementia.

These free trainings provide practical caregiving tools, emotional support, and evidence-based strategies to help navigate the challenges of dementia care. Open to Grand Traverse County residents.

Registration is required, and space is currently available for the January 23 session.

To learn more or register, please call 231-922-4688 and ask for Renee.

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