

Missouri SHL Bulletin

April 2023

A Newsletter for those who promote conscientious legislative advocacy for Missouri's older adults.



Missouri's Silver-Haired Legislature Lets Seniors Fight for Their Interests

By Barb Ittner, Immediate past president of the SHL, chair of the Region X delegation and the Senate Advocacy Chair

The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Missouri was the first state to establish a Silver Haired Legislature.



But what is it? The SHL, as it is frequently called, is an organized group of senior citizen volunteers who advocate on behalf of Missouri's older adults. Members are selected from the 10 Area Agency on Aging regions. Members must be at least 60 years old, but do not need to have silver hair.

In October, SHL delegates meet at the Capitol in the House and Senate Chambers for a model legislative session. Proposed bills are debated and voted upon and five priority issues selected.

SHL Top Five Priorities for 2023

- No Income Tax on Social Security Income
- Real Estate Tax Relief for Seniors
- Absentee and Early Voting for Seniors
- Increase Medicaid Asset Level
- Implement Dementia Specific Training in Licensed Long-Term Care Facilities

Missouri's SHL is patterned after the Missouri General Assembly's legislative bodies. The SHL, however, is non-partisan. It is organized and coordinated by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Division of Senior and Disability Services.

Each of the 10 Area Agencies on Aging can have 15 members consisting of three senators and 12

representatives. These SHL legislators ascertain the needs of seniors in their area. At the local delegation meetings, one priority and six alternate priorities are prepared for presentation to the Proposed Bills Committee in July.

The Proposed Bills Committee narrows the statewide proposals to 24. (Continued on Page 2)

SHL Will Also Support Legislative Action for the Following Issues

- Funding for Senior Services Growth and Development Program
- Increase Funding for Senior Transportation Services
- Expand MO Property Tax Credit to Include 100% Service-Connected Disabled Veterans, Regardless of Income
- Fund MO Senior Rx Program
- Mail-In Voting Options and Simplified Voter Registration
- Property Tax Credit Income Adjustment
- Money Recovered by the MO HealthNet Program to be Returned to the MO HealthNet Program

At the statewide fall session in Jefferson City, the SHL conducts a model legislative session. (Continued)

At the committee meetings, members introduce, debate and vote on the submitted docket from the Proposed Bills Committee. The four committees are health; social services; consumer affairs; and judiciary and taxation.

Proposals that pass are sent to

the House and Senate for further debate and votes. The top proposals are then forwarded to the Joint Session for five rounds of voting to establish the five priorities for the coming year.

Throughout the remainder of the year, SHL members work within their districts encouraging state legislators to address SHL issues by supporting and even sponsoring senior priorities and issues. SHL legislators advocate for these issues by speaking to groups interested in senior issues. Many testify in person at legislative hearings at the Capitol. Others communicate with legislators by phone or email when a specific SHL issue is being considered.

Is SHL effective? SHL has more than 60 items passed into law including creation of the Missouri Senior RX Program, Senior Services Growth and Development Program, strengthened pre-need funeral regulation, durable power of attorney to make healthcare decisions, and elder abuse law.

Who are the SHL members? They are a group of caring individuals from many walks of life including farmers, veterans, insurance adjusters, lawyers, pastors, medical personnel, VITA volunteers, election judges and even a 90-year-old world traveler from St. Louis.

SHL members serve two-year terms. There are no term limits for membership. The Area Agency on Aging holds elections at senior centers in May. Most region Area Agency on Aging have SHL openings. If you are interested in becoming a member, call your Area Agency on Aging and ask to speak with the SHL Coordinator.

To learn more about the Missouri Silver Haired Legislature, go to <https://Health.Mo.Gov/silverhaired>. There you will find a map of the various Area Agencies on Aging with contact information, the 2023 SHL brochure, photos of recent SHL meetings and bylaws.

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From the links you can track bills, committee hearings, contact legislators, and more.

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Getting to Know the SHL Board

President, John Kramer



Phone Interview by Tom Eyssell, SHL Communications Committee

How long have you been a member of the Silver-Haired Legislature?

JK: I have been a *member* for eight or nine years.

What caused you to join the Silver-Haired Legislature?

JK: I found a brochure in a Senior Center and it seemed interesting, so I applied.

How long have you lived in Bonne Terre, Missouri?

JK: We have lived in Bonne Terre for 34 years.

Tell us a bit about your background - what did you do before retiring, what interests do you have these days (apart from senior advocacy)?

JK: I retired from the U.S. Navy after twenty years. I taught briefly and then began selling real estate, which I did for twenty years.

With respect to other activities, I am the Commander of my American Legion Post and of its "40x8" group. I am also a commander of the Disabled Veterans and the service officer.

And, I have three grown daughters and nine grandchildren.

What do you think are the biggest issues facing seniors today?

JK: I think the biggest issues facing seniors today are:

- The costs of medication – too many seniors are forced to choose between buying medications and paying other bills.
- I have also been working on obtaining Senior Center funding, and feel we are making progress in getting the money promised in the Senior Growth and Development Fund.
- Senior transportation, particularly in rural Missouri, is also a major problem.

What would you like to say to someone interested in joining the SHL?

JK: The Silver-Haired Legislature is an outstanding organization but needs even greater involvement by Missouri's seniors. It's a great opportunity to sit in the House and Senate Chambers and help formulate the group's annual priorities.

Celebrating 50 Years of Countless Journeys!

Submitted by: Jan Keith, Director of
Community Engagement, Aging Ahead



LISA KNOLL, AGING AHEAD CEO AND MARY EVANS, 2023
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

To kick off their 50th Anniversary, Aging Ahead hosted an Open House for staff, volunteers and community partners on Thursday, February 2nd. The Lieutenant Governor, Mike Kehoe, sent a special video message and declaration recognizing Aging Ahead for an outstanding 50 years of providing essential programs and service to older adults and their caregivers. With more than 100 in attendance, the evening honored staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication to area older adults.

Aging Ahead also launched their inaugural *“Delivering a Difference Volunteer of the Year”* award during the event. The 2023 Delivering a Difference Volunteer Award went to Mary Evans. Mary, formerly the Home Delivered Meals Coordinator (HDMC) at the St. Peters center location, retired in 2018. Prior to her 20 years of service, Mary and her husband, Jim, delivered meals for many years. Following her retirement, Mary decided to continue her journey with Aging Ahead as a volunteer once again. Teri Fletcher, Senior Center Administrator at St. Peters, nominated Mary and shared, “We are extremely fortunate to have such a helpful and dedicated volunteer.” Mary volunteers at the St. Peters Center three days each week, answering the phones, making reservations, and is a wealth of information for all that visit the center. “I enjoy seeing old friends and meeting new ones. Aging Ahead was a great place to work, and now a great place to volunteer. I guess you can’t get rid of me!”

Aging Ahead’s driving force is to provide critical connections through programs and services that help avoid premature or unnecessary hospitalization and institutionalization in the older adult community. We believe all should have opportunities to age well. We thank the Lieutenant Governor for his comments, declaration, and recognition of the work we do to support older Missourians. To view his comments, please visit www.agingahead.org. More information about the Open House

and all things Aging Ahead can be found in their winter newsletter, which can also be found on the website. To contact Aging Ahead, please call 636-207-0847 or email info@agingahead.org.



Missouri Legislative Calendar

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| April 10 | Easter Holiday |
| May 5 | Last Day for Floor Action on Appropriation Bills |
| May 12 | Last Day of Session |
| September 13 | Veto Session |

Wentzville Celebrates Opening of New Senior Center

Submitted by Barb Mercadante, Aging Ahead, SHL Communications Committee

Older adults were welcomed into their new Aging Ahead Senior Center located in the Wentzville Recreational Facility during Thanksgiving Week 2022.

The new Aging Ahead Senior Center will continue to operate the Wentzville Meals on Wheels Program for Wentzville's ever-growing senior clientele, and

lunches are currently served to members at the senior center 3 times per week. In addition, many activities are offered at the center ranging from birthday and holiday parties to trivia and bingo nights. Transportation is provided for qualified older adults. Plus, additional daily and special activities are coordinated by the energetic Wentzville Senior Center staff.

It's safe to say, "The Aging Ahead Wentzville Senior Center offers it all!"



A Month of Celebration with the Birthday Party, Valentines Day Party and Mardi Gras!



Women's History Celebration

Submitted By Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo, St. Louis Area Agency on Aging, SHL Communications Committee

Southside Wellness Center held a Women's History Celebration on Thursday, March 23rd, 2023, in St. Louis. "This event was a memorial tribute to one of our members, Carolyn Smith, who suddenly passed away recently," said Ms. Ollie Stewart, the center director. The featured speaker was Dr. Kendra Holmes, President and CEO of Affinia Healthcare. Attendees included Mayor Tishaura O. Jones and over 100 people from different media and community development organizations and senior centers throughout the city. Everyone was treated to a soul food luncheon and gospel music.



MS. OLLIE STEWART,
DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTHSIDE
WELLNESS CENTER.



"I am so grateful for the many people who invest in me. Food Outreach invests in me and that is a blessing. You are game changers. You are genuine."

Nathan, Food Outreach client

Client Stories--Meet Nathan

Submitted by Christine Blonn and Julie Lock, Food Outreach

Recently, Food Outreach launched a pilot program focused on providing nutrition interventions for local veterans diagnosed with uncontrolled diabetes. Here is Nathan's story.

After the Job Corps, Nathan joined the armed forces, traveling to Texas, Florida, and South Carolina on active duty for two years. Later he became a long-haul truck driver crisscrossing the lower 48 states minus North Dakota and Idaho. "I went everywhere, but

nowhere I wanted to go," said Nathan, fondly remembering the time he saw the Statue of Liberty from a distance on three different routes. "Imagine trying to park a semi-truck in New York City."

Being a trucker kept him busy, though it was challenging during the seventies. "I went through a lot of angst on the road, traveling through unfriendly places and dealing with mean-spirited racism. Eating well was hard on the road," explained Nathan. "I am diabetic in the worst way."

An amputee and disabled veteran, Nathan has lived with diabetes for 23 years and experienced multiple bouts of homelessness. "I was homeless for five years when the VA picked me up this last time, got me housed, and referred me to Food Outreach," said Nathan.

"This is my first-time getting delivery," said Nathan, who before winter would "take two busses" and "two trolleys" to Food Outreach's midtown location. "It gave me purpose. I was going to get food. Luke [client services manager] saw me, an old man coming in on a broken-down scooter during the wintertime. You know, it's bad when snails are passing you, and he said let us bring you your meals. Luke has heart. He's good people. Everyone at Food Outreach is working out of their heart."

Nathan appreciates all our meals and emphasizes they cover four critical bases. "They're delicious and nutritious. They're physically appealing to the eyes, and they have signature tastes," he said. "The meals are not overly seasoned, and everything tastes like it's supposed to taste. Chicken tastes like chicken. I've always had a standard. I got champagne taste on a beer budget, but I'm telling you the food from Food Outreach is equal to a 5-star restaurant—with bigger portions!"

At Food Outreach, we are grateful for the generosity of our supporters and community for making it possible for our agency to change lives one meal at a time.

Food Outreach is the only St. Louis area organization whose mission is to provide nutritional support and enhance the quality of life of men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS or cancer. One of its funders is the St. Louis Area Agency on Aging.



The Nation's 1st Model SHL Celebrates 50th Anniversary



The Missouri Silver Haired Legislature has the distinction of being the *very first organization of its kind in the United States.*

In 1973, a small group of senior citizens met with the President Pro Tem of the Senate, William Cason, to discuss and form a group whose specific purpose was to advocate for senior issues.

Throughout the years, the SHL has served as a legitimate voice for older adults, to support legislation to improve the lives of all senior Missourians.

Future SHL Bulletins will have information on plans to celebrate this milestone.



AGING UNBOUND: MAY 2023



May Is Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month is celebrated every May and has been observed for the past 60 years. The purpose of the month is to acknowledge the contributions and achievements of older Americans, highlight important trends, and strengthen the commitment to honor older citizens.

This year's theme, *Aging Unbound*, offers an opportunity to explore a wide range of aging experiences and to promote the importance of enjoying independence and fulfillment by paving our own paths as we age.

Published Bi-Monthly (April, June, August, October, December, February). Contributions due by the 15th of the previous month to SHL Communications Chair, Sheila Bassoppo-Moyo, bassoppo-moyos@stlouis-mo.gov or co-editor Karma Metzgar, metzgark@outlook.com. For more information: [Silver Haired Legislature | Health & Senior Services \(mo.gov\)](#) or <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/silverhaired/>