

**FOR RELEASE**  
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**The Region IV Area Agency on Aging Receives Two Prestigious Awards for Aging Innovations & Achievement from USAgging**

*St. Joseph, Mich.* The Region IV Area Agency on Aging (RIVAAA) announces that it recently received two awards – the 2022 Aging Achievement Award and the 2022 Aging Innovations Award from USAgging, both among the highest honors presented by USAgging to its members. Both awards focused on RIVAAA programs developed and launched in response to community need during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**2022 Aging Achievement Award.** *Deploying Rapid Response HCBS to Reduce Hospitalizations* Program provides in-home supportive services (personal care, meals, transportation, assistive devices, etc...) to older adults allowing them to recover from COVID-19 at home and offers respite services for their caregivers. Through coordination with local health system and public health partners this program has reduced length of stay and avoided hospitalizations and decreased emergency department visits supporting recovery at home.

**2022 Aging Innovations Award.** The *Bridging the Gap – Addressing Unmet Needs for DCWs* Program was developed in response to COVID-19 Pandemic impacts and hardships experienced by the direct-care workforce (DCW). Through board-designated funding, RIVAAA was able to rapidly establish a program and fund to support DCWs with emergent needs that could impact their ability to maintain employment such as car repairs, cell phone minute costs, mentorship & job training needs and many other unique supports that helped to reduce turnover rates and sustain direct care workers across the tri-county area.

These two programs were among just 13 innovation projects and 30 achievement programs nation-wide to receive honors during USAgging's 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Tradeshow, July 10-13 in Austin, TX. The awards program is supported by iN2L, provider of the leading engagement and social connection platform for seniors, offering a foundation for activities that facilitate social interaction, cognitive and physical exercise, education, reminiscing, areas of interest and memory support engagement.

The 2022 USAgging Aging Innovations and Achievement Awards programs recognize Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Aging Programs that have developed and implemented cutting-edge concepts, innovative ideas, and successful strategies to support older adults and their caregivers. Among the selection criteria was the ease with which other agencies could replicate the program in their communities.

“Through the Aging Innovations and Achievement Awards, we salute our members’ outstanding accomplishments and hold up their programs in the hopes that doing so will seed replication and additional innovation by their peers around the country,” said Sandy Markwood, Chief Executive Officer of USAging. “We applaud our members for their tireless efforts to creatively develop vital services and supports for older adults, as well as their caregivers and people with disabilities in communities nationwide.”

“It was an honor to accept these awards on behalf of the RIVAAA team and our community partners; it was truly a collective effort to rapidly identify and stand up these programs during initial months of the pandemic,” shared Christine Vanlandingham, Chief Executive Officer of RIVAAA. “The Area Agency on Aging remains committed to developing and sustaining innovative programs and works that center older adults, persons living with disabilities and their care partners and ensures all community members can thrive in independent settings and remain home throughout their adult years.”

All winners are showcased in the [USAging Aging Innovations and Achievement Awards Showcase](#).

#### About Region IV Area Agency on Aging

Region IV Area Agency on Aging is a private, not-for-profit corporation. Established in 1974 for the business of developing age supportive commerce and services, it plays a major role in planning, funding, and delivery of a host of services. Empowerment and independence of community members are driving themes behind its efforts. Designated by the State of Michigan to receive federal Older Americans Act funds for planning and development, the agency manages an array of government contracts for service delivery in southwest Michigan. Its primary service area includes Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. For more information about the RIVAAA, visit [www.areaagencyonaging.org](http://www.areaagencyonaging.org)

#### About USAging

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. USAging is dedicated to supporting the success of our members through advancing public policy, sparking innovation, strengthening the capacity of our members, raising their visibility and working to drive excellence in the fields of aging and home and community-based services. For more information about USAging, AAs or Title VI programs, visit [www.usaging.org](http://www.usaging.org).

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**Photo: Region IV Area Agency on Aging team members celebrating USAging Innovations and Achievement Awards. Picture taken outside of RIVAAA Campus for Creative Aging, 2920 Lakeview Avenue, St. Joseph, MI 49085.**