A Message from the President & CEO

Welcome to our 2022 Virtual Rise & Shine Fundraiser and Awards Ceremony!

Senior Connection Center always hosts Rise & Shine in May as our way to celebrate Older Americans Month. The theme for Older Americans Month 2022 is Age Your Way, and I think you will agree that the rich and purposeful lives of this year’s Salt & Pepper Outstanding Senior Award winners exemplify the true meaning of this theme. This event also provides us the opportunity to celebrate an innovative new business with our Senior-Friendly Business of the Year award, as well as allowing us to summarize some of the important work Senior Connection staff and volunteers have been doing over the past year.

As you will see, in spite of the pandemic, Senior Connection Center continued to meet Our Mission: To help older adults and persons with disabilities live with independence and dignity.

We broadened our capacity to serve with new and innovative programs, such as offering Virtual Health & Wellness classes and providing Telephone Reassurance to mitigate the effects of social isolation and loneliness that so many seniors were experiencing. Our expansion of Meal Programs meant more seniors had safe and convenient access to nutritious food, and through our Door-to-Door Vaccine Outreach, we were able to help isolated seniors safely access the Covid-19 vaccine, either in their own homes or at a local vaccine sites.
Of course, we continued to provide our traditional services, such as assisting seniors-in-need to find and obtain eldercare services, helping them navigate the complex maze of Medicare, as well as working with frail and at-risk seniors to obtain access to Long Term Care services.

Rise & Shine is our main fundraiser for the year, with the proceeds going towards our Crisis Funds, which help resolve issues that would have devastating consequences for the affected senior. These Crisis Funds have been used in a number of ways, including rental assistance, appliance purchases, and septic tank repairs, to name just a few. We also use the monies we raise at Rise & Shine to seed innovations through our Mini-Grants, which fund community projects that focus on meeting hunger needs, addressing social isolation and loneliness, and home repairs.

I hope you enjoyed watching this year’s event and that it inspired you to make a donation to Senior Connection Center. I like to say, “Give until it feels good,” and by doing so we can continue to help seniors-in-need.

I am so grateful you were able to join us for the 2022 Rise & Shine virtual event. My hope is that next year, we will be hosting a live and in-person Rise & Shine 2023!

Thank you for joining the celebration and for supporting Senior Connection Center,

Charlotte McHenry
President & CEO

PS - If you missed Rise & Shine when it premiered on May 24th, or if you want to watch it again, you can view it on our YouTube Channel. Just visit the home page of SeniorConnectionCenter.org and click on the link for Rise & Shine 2022.
Senior Connection Center (SCC) Continues to Provide Traditional Services While Also Addressing Pandemic-Related Needs

SCC’s Aging & Disability Resource Center is comprised of our Elder Helpine, SHINE and Long Term Care (LTC) teams who work cooperatively to make sure local seniors are connected to the programs and services they need. In 2021, more than 114,000 calls came into SCC’s Aging & Disability Resource Center and Elder Helpline.

SHINE Counselors are highly trained volunteers who provide local seniors with unbiased advice and assistance regarding anything Medicare-related, including picking the right plan, understanding bills, filing claims, and finding options to lower their out-of-pocket costs.

In 2021, SCC’s team of SHINE staff and volunteers:

- Documented 8,803 client contacts, more than 5,000 were low-income, 1,194 had disabilities, and more than 2,000 were over the age of 75.
- Helped over 700 low-income individuals apply for Medicare Savings Programs, leading to a combined savings of more than $1.1 million annually
- Reached 3,352 people at 189 Outreach Events

SCC is the gateway for frail and low-income seniors to secure Long Term Care services, including Medicaid Managed Care. These services allow at-risk seniors to remain at home and avoid premature nursing home placement.

In 2021, SCC helped frail and at-risk seniors with:

- 109,000 hours of Homemaker services
- 52,000 hours of Personal Care services
- 2,700 Trips for Doctor Visits and other essential services

The Covid 19 Pandemic caused many senior centers and meal sites to close, thereby increasing the need to provide them with home-delivered meals.

In 2021 SCC helped needy seniors by funding 1,552,253 meals

Thank you SHINE volunteers!
A Long Term Care Client Story

In June 2021, Ms. E’s lost her home and belongings in a fire that also took the life of her husband. Her niece, Becky, who stepped in to assist her aunt admits, “I was in completely unknown territory and needed information I could trust, so I contacted Senior Connection Center (SCC) to find services for my aunt…It took a few months, but with SCC’s assistance my aunt was placed into a wonderful Assisted Living facility in Plant City where she is thriving and making new friends… I cannot thank Senior Connection Center enough for their help, which is allowing my aunt to live her remaining years in a place where she is safe, she is cared for, and she is loved.”

Covid Vaccine Outreach

SCC’s team of Covid 19 Outreach workers helped seniors find and obtain Covid 19 vaccines by distributing informational flyers, not only at outdoor events, but also by going door-to-door in neighborhoods with a high number of older residents.

- In 2021, Covid 19 Outreach Workers knocked on 7,000 doors and distributed an additional 2,000 Covid 19 flyers at community events.

Telephone Reassurance

SCC and our network of providers made phone calls to local at-risk seniors, with a focus on reaching those who were living alone and, therefore, most likely to be affected by the social isolation and loneliness brought about by the Pandemic. We assessed their needs and referred them for SCC and other appropriate services. 88,273 seniors living in our 5-county service area received Telephone Reassurance calls in 2021.
Welcome to Rise & Shine 2022
About the Salt & Pepper Awards...

Senior Connection Center initiated the Salt and Pepper Awards in 2008 as our way of recognizing the amazing achievements and acts of service performed by older adults who live right here in our community. Every year, we continue to be amazed and inspired by each and every nomination we receive, and we always struggle to select just one award recipient in each category.

As you may have guessed, we selected the name “Salt & Pepper” for this award because it alludes to those flecks of gray that tend to appear in our hair as we age. But the name was also chosen as a tribute to the late, Honorable Claude Pepper, who was instrumental in crafting legislation that continues to help older Americans today, including Social Security and Medicare. Claude Pepper continued to represent and serve the residents of the State of Florida in Congress until he passed away at the age of 88.

As always, this year’s Salt & Pepper Award winners would certainly make Claude Pepper proud. And they embody the theme of this year’s Older Americans Month, Age Your Way! These talented and generous people have chosen to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, and it is our pleasure to share their stories with all of you as we honor them with the 2022 Salt & Pepper Outstanding Senior Awards!
2022 Salt & Pepper
Outstanding Senior Award Winners

Philanthropist of the Year

According to the dictionary, a philanthropist is someone who donates their time, money, experience, skills, or talent to help create a better world. That pretty much sums up our 2022 Philanthropist of the Year, Charles “Charlie” Burdette.

Charlie spent more than 30 years volunteering for various organizations in Maryland, where he received many awards for his service, including the Governor’s Outstanding Volunteer Award in 2004.

Fortunately for us, Charlie decided to relocate to Lakeland in 2005. He quickly became involved in numerous nonprofit and civic organizations in his new community, actively volunteering his time and donating his own personal funds to numerous organizations that help people in need.

Charlie has served as a leader for Talbot House Ministries, where he enthusiastically volunteers for fundraising events and coordinates in-kind donations. His efforts touch the lives of those suffering from homelessness in our community, including at least 300 seniors annually. Charlie also volunteers at the Rath Senior ConNEXTions Center, has served on the board of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and was a dedicated volunteer for Volunteers In Service to the Elderly (VISTE).

Charlie’s knowledge of his community has made him a valuable asset to Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine, an organization that provides medical supplies to grassroots healthcare organizations such as the Good Samaritan Clinic, which he also supports with his personal donations.

Charlie is always lending a helping hand as well as donating funds to Elder Point Ministries, the United Methodist Temple, and the Faith Lutheran Church in Lakeland. He also gives of his time and expertise to the Lakeland Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association.

It would be impossible to count the literally tens of thousands of hours of service Charlie has donated to his community over the years, which is why he is this year’s Salt & Pepper Philanthropist of the Year.
Salt & Pepper Award Winners

Business & Entrepreneurship

Hispanic businesses in Polk County were looking for a leader to give them a voice; one that would help them promote and grow their businesses and better reach the Hispanic community. Ana Rivera's diverse experience, along with her high energy and enthusiasm, provided the background and expertise necessary to take on the challenge. So, in 2007, Mrs. Rivera launched the Puerto Rican Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Polk County. Since then, Mrs. Rivera provided the guidance and mentoring necessary to help local business owners become more successful by improving their networking skills and expanding business development opportunities. Over the past 15 years, the Puerto Rican Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Polk County has become the primary organization for all size businesses who want to build a rapport with the Hispanic community in Polk County. The Chamber offers an array of programs, including job fairs, educational speakers, business summits, and social events. And they continue to strive to be seen as the ambassadors of goodwill within the Hispanic and Non-Hispanic community by building a bridge of communication between Polk County, Puerto Rico and all other Hispanic communities. Is it any wonder why Ana Rivera was selected to win this year's Salt & Pepper Business & Entrepreneurship Award?

Thank you to our sponsors

AARP Real Possibilities Tampa Bay
Community Service & Volunteerism

Carol White has been involved in health care her entire life, working both as a nurse and as a social worker in a variety of health care settings. Carol also has several family members with Alzheimer’s disease, so she knows, first hand, the impact of dementia on the affected individual and their loved ones. When Carol retired, she quickly realized her new purpose was to volunteer for the Alzheimer’s Association, and she has been an all-around champion for them ever since. Carol serves in a number of different volunteer roles for the Alzheimer’s Association, including Program Promoter, monthly Support Group Facilitator, and Community Educator, and she serves on the Alzheimer’s Association’s National Care and Support Volunteer Advisory Committee. As a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association, she has educated several thousand individuals in these various roles, and consistently ranks as a top performer, not just in Florida but nationally. In 2021, Carol ranked 3rd nationally as program volunteer for community education, having served 609 constituents in 31 programs. Of course, Carol participates in Walk to End Alzheimer’s, both as a donor and as a promoter. Along with her dedication to the Alzheimer’s Association, Carol truly demonstrates this year’s theme for Older Americans Month, which is *Age Your Way!* This is why Carol is this year’s winner for the Salt & Pepper Award for Community Service and Volunteerism.

Thank you to our sponsors
More About the 2022 Salt & Pepper Award Winners

Heath & Wellness

Izora Bullock first began promoting health and wellness in 2014 when she became a community lay leader with Senior Connection Center’s Health & Wellness department and she quickly became a health & wellness overachiever. She is certified to teach fall-prevention classes like Tai Chi and A Matter of Balance, Diabetes and other Chronic Disease Self-Management classes, and Savvy Caregiver, to name just a few. In addition to teaching, Izora is known to actively recruit her enthusiastic class participants to become community lay leaders as well, thereby opening up these services to broader audiences, including minorities, low-income seniors, and those living in rural communities. Izora is the founder and President of LIFE Limbs, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides community-based Health & Wellness education as well as Community Health Worker training opportunities on such topics as mental health, chronic diseases, and, most recently, COVID-19. Izora also sits on Senior Connection Center’s Advisory Council, where her awareness of the issues facing seniors makes her a respected spokesperson for the older adults living in her community. Izora is a committed and wonderful role model who truly deserves to win this year’s Salt & Pepper Award for Health and Wellness.

Thank you to our sponsors
Bill Hodges is known for sharing his positive energy through his writing, his voice, and his actions. Bill is a passionate advocate for veterans and an active member of many of Tampa’s veterans’ organizations. In 2018, Bill launched the Veterans Corner Radio program on Sun Radio WSCQ-FM. This program engages veterans and increases their awareness of the benefits available to them. In 2020, he expanded his reach by offering a widely popular podcast of the same name, which, in April 2022, reached a milestone of 25,000 downloads by listeners in all 50 states and 28 countries around the world. In 2019, Bill and his wife, Phyllis started Freedom Floats, a program that entertains veterans with complimentary pontoon boat rides. That same year, the Veterans Council of Hillsborough County awarded Bill the Keeping the American Patriotic Spirit Alive award. And even though Bill may not have been a military officer, in 2021 the local chapter of the Military Officers Association of America honored Bill by making him an Honorary Member. This year the Military Order of World Wars (MOWW) chose him as the first “Patriot” in a nationwide Patriot Program that allows exceptional veteran advocates to participate in MOWW activities. For all that Bill Hodges does to keep up the spirits of veterans and his community in general, we are presenting him with this year’s Salt & Pepper Award for Arts and Entertainment.
Senior-Friendly Business of the Year

Every year, Senior Connection Center recognizes a local business that excels in providing care and services to older adults with their Senior-Friendly Business of the Year Award. This year’s winner, Network Eye, launched an innovative initiative in the Tampa area to identify and address the most common and treatable causes of preventable blindness in older adults, macular degeneration and diabetes, and to make these services convenient and affordable. Over the past year, Network Eye has brought their retina clinics into the retail pharmacy setting, helping seniors and caregivers combine trips to the pharmacy with their eye care visits. They also constructed a mobile eye clinic, which they are bringing to senior living communities throughout the Tampa Bay area. This allows them to work with local seniors on their eye health, including treating and monitoring patients with macular degeneration and diabetes. And their hope is to continue to expand these services throughout the greater Tampa Bay area in the years to come.

For their innovative approach and commitment to improving the lives of local seniors, we are presenting the 2022 Senior-Friendly Business of the Year Award to Network Eye.

Thank you to our sponsors
Your Donations Make a Difference:
Donations from the Rise & Shine fundraiser support our Crisis Funds and Mini-Grants. Here are a few examples of the impact these donations had on the lives of local seniors...

Crisis Funds at Work

After several months of being homeless, Mr. D finally found an affordable apartment, He discovered his belongings had become infested with insects while in storage. His apartment would need to be exterminated or he would be evicted. Mr. D was physically unable to prepare for the exterminators and he was facing homelessness again. With only $800 in Crisis Funds, we hired a company to organize Mr. D’s home so it could be exterminated. He now has a clean and orderly place to live.

Mrs. G was already struggling with health issues when her husband became seriously ill and needed emergency surgery. His illness was caused by the mold infestation in their home, making it unsafe for them to return. They rented a hotel room, but did not have the money to continue to stay there while they looked for a new place to live. With only $850 in Crisis Funds, Mr. and Mrs. G were able to stay in the hotel until they found a safe and affordable place to call home.

Mini-Grants at Work

Last year’s Senior Connection Center’s Mini-Grants funded a Computer Lab at Sterling Place, Food and Transportation Services with Faith in Action, and a monthly column about issues that impact seniors in the Osprey Observer. But, perhaps the most creative Mini Grant initiative was the Silvers Screen Outdoor Mobile Movie Project, spearheaded by Hillsborough County Dept. of Aging Services. Seniors throughout the County were treated to a safe, outdoor movie experiences, while celebrating such themes as Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Congratulations to this year’s Mini Grant recipients: The Center for Independent Living in Central Florida (Polk, Highlands and Hardee Counties), City of Tampa Housing Authority (Hillsborough County), and Talbot House Ministries (Polk County). We look forward to sharing your Mini-Grant success stories at the 2023 Rise & Shine event!
Thank you for joining us for Rise & Shine!

Now that you know more about Senior Connection Center, we hope you will join us in fulfilling our mission to help older adults and persons with disabilities live with independence and dignity. Here’s how…

Refer someone to the Elder Helpline

Perhaps you know a local senior who requires assistance or a caregiver who needs a break from their caregiving responsibilities. Please encourage them to reach out to the Elder Helpline:

1-800-96-ELDER
1-800-963-5337
SeniorConnectionCenter.org

We are just a call or click away!

Become a SHINE Volunteer

Senior Connection Center is looking for SHINE volunteers to help educate and counsel older adults about Medicare and other health insurance issues. Please contact Amy.Hagel@sccmail.org or call 813-676-5551 for more information about this rewarding volunteer opportunity.

Get involved with our Health & Wellness classes

Senior Connection Center’s evidence-based Health & Wellness classes are a great way for adults of all ages and abilities to get healthy and stay healthy. Please contact Patricia.Henderson@sccmail.org or call 813-676-5609 to learn more about taking a class or becoming a volunteer instructor.

Make a donation to our Crisis Funds

By contributing to Senior Connection Center’s Crisis Funds, you can help prevent a devastating crisis from happening to a senior facing an unexpected financial problem or setback. Donations can be made by visiting SeniorConnectionCenter.org and clicking DONATE NOW.

Learn more about us at SeniorConnectionCenter.org
I am proud to support the efforts of Senior Connection Center with my donation in the amount of:

_____ $500      _____ $200      _____ $100      _____ $50      _____ $25      other $______________

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

City: __________________________________________________ State: ____________________ Zip: _______________________

Email: _____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Phone: ( ____________ )  ____________ – __________________________________________________________________________

Thank You!
Senior Connection Center would like to acknowledge and thank those who serve on our Board of Directors and Advisory Council for their hard work and dedication to our organization and the older adults, persons with disabilities, and their caregivers who live in the communities we serve:

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SCC President & CEO, Charlotte McHenry and Board Chair, Georgiana Goodson at the 2022 Rise & Shine Awards Ceremony