

## Meet the New Program Manager of Community Service Programs

By C. Clark

As part of the Oregon Cascades West COG family since November 2014, **Alicia Lucke** has made great improvements and contributions that have earned her a new title as the Programs Manager of Community Services Programs (CSP).



Over the years Alicia's role at OCWCOG has evolved, but her excitement with the expansion of the AmeriCorps program has been consistent. With her help, OCWCOG now oversees all three AmeriCorps Seniors Programs: Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program (as of July 2015), and the Senior Companion Program (as of July 2018). Overseeing all three Programs, she has helped to create efficiencies and streamline processes, creating the go to place for volunteers 55+ within the OCWCOG region!

*"It is my hope that each staff and volunteer is constantly refining and adding to their professional/volunteer toolkit so they feel empowered and confident to serve others."*

She continues to emphasize how fortunate she is to have staff who have a genuine love for seniors and the field of gerontology, while also being cognizant of federal awards standards; and, is grateful for support staff who regularly aids her team.

Before moving to Oregon, Alicia studied abroad in Spain and Mexico, earned degrees in Spanish, Political Science, and a Masters in Development Administration, and was trained by the U.S. Government in Adult Learning Strategies. She also served as a training linguist before moving to Oregon. Alicia's grandmother was an incredible advocate for people with disabilities and an avid community volunteer all throughout her life. Once Alicia settled down in the Willamette Valley, she jumped at the opportunity to work with volunteers like her grandmother.

Alicia raves about her fantastic family at home, which includes her husband and three kids, ages 9, 7, and 2. They love all things sports; whether it's cheering for the kids during soccer, playing tennis, or bantering over March Madness brackets, they are sure to cheer for each other regardless of the score.

March marks a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reflecting on this, Alicia comments that while it has not been an easy or perfect process, she has been amazed at how well the OCWCOG staff and its volunteers have shown such genuine team effort in adapting and refining their approach to meet these growing challenges.

*"Truth is, we spend a large chunk of our life in a work setting and it makes all the difference when where you work has that "team" feel, especially during a pandemic. I am very proud to be on OCWCOG's team!"*

Bolstered by the support and confidence of her community and team, Alicia is ready to continue the mission of overseeing AmeriCorps Seniors and expanding community-facing programs at OCWCOG, both in terms of capacity building, service delivery, and budget and contract monitoring and evaluation. OCWCOG is fortunate to have her drive and commitment to the region.

# COVID-19 Updates

*we're all in this*  
**TOGETHER**

## Stimulus Bill & FMLA

COVID-19 has been with us for a full year. While much of the news about the latest stimulus bill has been focused on individual and household payments, there are also policy updates for the workplace. Most notably the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has a provision allowing employers to extend the expanded FMLA leaves one more time through September 30, 2021.

While the expanded FMLA is through a tax credit available to most employers, we have recently found that as a public employer we are not eligible for these tax credits. However, as a leadership team, knowing how challenging this last year has been, we elected to continue to offer this leave as it is the right thing to.

## Utility and Rent Relief Assistance Programs

There are still several programs available to help and support individuals who are effected by the pandemic, specifically through Community Services Consortium (CSC). [CSC is offering specific COVID-19 Energy Assistance programs to everyone within the region through September 30, 2021.](#)

Energy Assistance Appointment Scheduling Lines:

- Linn County: 541-926-7163
- Benton County: 541-752-2840
- Lincoln County: 541-265-3293

Visit [the CSC website](#) for more information

CSC is also providing Rent Relief support for 2021. Visit [the CSC Rent eligibility website](#) or call (541) 704-7506 for more information and take the eligibility questionnaire to start the process. This assistance can support all those who have lost income due to COVID-19 and owe back rent as far back as April 1, 2020.

## Program Updates

### Community Economic Development

*By Jenny Glass*

### Transportation

- Completed the Highway 99W Transit Feasibility Study. This collaboration with the University of Oregon, researched the demand along Highway 99W between Junction City and McMinnville. Key findings found variances between the population demographics and frequency of transportation needs.
- Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (AAMPO) is working with Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) to update the Corvallis-Albany-Lebanon Model (CALM), the region's travel demand model
- AAMPO/CAMPO had successful Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) review with State and Federal partners
- Continuing work on Albany Area MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Co-managing Jefferson Transportation System Plan (TSP) update, beginning talks with Tangent to update their TSP
- Helping with Cherriot's Salem to Albany Corridor Feasibility Study Project
- Albany Transit System (ATS) has a Transit Development Plan from 2018 that provided a general outline for transit improvements over short, medium, and long term scenarios. This is part of a long-range Regional Transportation Plan. Moving forward, this project develops a more detailed implementation strategy, finalizing routes, stops, and schedules. The COG is handling project management and public outreach, and is working with consultants Nelson\Nygaard who are providing technical support, utilizing the outline provided by the 2018 Transit Development Plan. Visit the [AAMPO website](#) for more information



## RideLine

- Since the start of the pandemic, Ride Line has been providing Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT); providing over 60,000 rides to over 4,000 unique individuals. These numbers are from April 2020 – December 2020. This does not include mileage reimbursement. For mileage we have reimbursed over 22,000 trips to over 550 unique individuals.
- Our NEMT Drivers were eligible for the COVID Vaccine in Phase 1a. They were in Group 3.
- RideLine has been providing transport to COVID testing sites and also had started providing transport to COVID Vaccine sites.

## Community Development

- OCWCOG staff provide planning and land use services in Yachats and Toledo
- Helped secure a Transportation Growth Management grant in Sweet Home
- Cascades West Regional Consortium, an independent 501c3 supported by OCWCOG, continues to meet to work on issues surrounding land development in wetland areas
- OCWCOG continues to provide GIS mapping services to the region including:
  - Geodatabase maintenance for Philomath, Toledo, Monroe and Adair Village utilities (storm, water, sewer) and administrative data, with interactive viewers;
  - Buildable Lands Inventories

## Senior, Disability & Community Services

By Randi Moore

### Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) Helps People Navigate Vaccination Process

Navigating the systems put in place by County Health Departments to receive a COVID-19 vaccination can be a complicated process. Unfortunately, the community members who are most vulnerable to the COVID-19 Virus, older adults and people with disabilities, face even more barriers than their neighbors in understanding and managing the process for getting vaccinated.



These barriers include a lack of computer proficiency (which is the way appointments are being scheduled), inability to leave their home to go to clinic locations, and a lack of accessible transportation.

ADRC call center agents are receiving a large number of calls from at risk community members daily and are providing a much needed resource for callers seeking support and information. Additionally, callers who identify their desire to get signed up for a vaccine but don't have the ability to do it for themselves and have no friends or family to assist, are routed to an agent who can help them register for an appointment time, explain the process, and schedule a time for the booster to be administered.

Consumers identifying that they have a lack of transportation to vaccine clinic locations are referred to the ADRC supervisory team who are problem-solving these issues on a case by case basis.

The inconsistency of being able to find appointment times available is a frustration for staff, but a work around of tracking consumers who called and calling them back to schedule when time slots open up weekly has been developed.

Consumers who have an ongoing relationship with the agency through a Case Manager are being called and provided information and support, including scheduling an appointment if necessary. Oregon Department of Human Services has allowed Case Managers extra time to do this work by forestalling appointments due in March and April.



## Adult Protective Services Numbers Continue to Increase

OCWCOG's Adult Protective Services (APS) team investigates allegations of verbal, sexual, and physical abuse, as well as neglect and financial exploitation. Protective services are provided to those 65 and older, and people with physical disabilities over the age of 18.

Preventing abuse and neglect before it happens and bringing awareness of the issue to the community has been the focus of the increased outreach the unit has done over the last four years. Data pulled recently for the creation of OCWCOG's 2021-2025 Area Plan highlighted how that outreach has affected the workload for the APS unit since 2017.

## AmeriCorps for Seniors

The AmeriCorps for Seniors Programs (formerly known as SeniorCorps), in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, connects senior volunteers, aged 55 and over, with the people and organizations that need them most in the region.

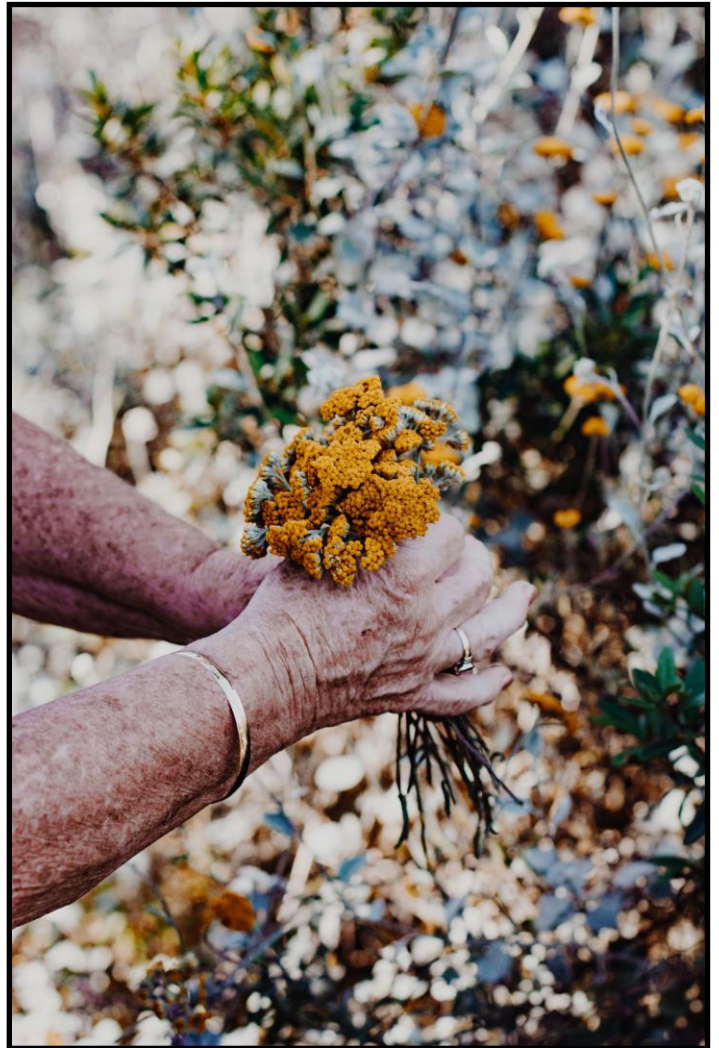
Volunteers serve as tutors, mentors, counselors, and/or companions to people in need, or contribute their job skills and expertise to community projects and organizations.

These volunteers receive guidance and training, so they can make a contribution that suits their talents, interests, and availability. Volunteers are offered volunteer insurance, mileage and meal reimbursements, and recognition for their service. Income-eligible volunteers are offered a tax-exempt stipend.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP): RSVP is America's largest volunteer network for people age 55 and over, matching volunteers with agencies whose primary focus is to assist seniors to age in place. RSVP volunteers primarily serve in local food share and Gleaners programs, as Medicare and Tax-Aide counselors, and as friendly visitor volunteers.

RSVP also operates the Department of Consumer and Business Services' Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) program through an Intergovernmental Agreement with the State of Oregon. SHIBA provides training and certification of volunteers who help residents navigate the complexities of Medicare, identify Medicare fraud, and apply for help with Part D costs if eligible

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP): FGP recruits and matches volunteers to children aged five to 18 in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties. The FGP is intergenerational,



providing volunteers the opportunity to mentor, nurture, and support children with special or exceptional needs, or who are at an academic, social, or financial disadvantage. OCWCOG has a priority placement of literacy volunteers working with young English Language Learners (ELLs)

Senior Companion Program (SCP): SCP volunteers serve less able seniors and other adults, helping them maintain independence and age in place. Among other activities, Senior Companions assist with daily living tasks, such as non-medical transportation; provide friendship and companionship; alert doctors and family members to potential problems; and provide respite to family caregivers.

# Highlights & Other Updates

## Thank you from Meals on Wheels!

Meals on Wheels (MOW) received a generous donation of over \$50,000. The MOW program serves hot, nutritious mid-day meals to those who are at least 60 years of age and their spouses, and to Native Americans who are at least 55 years of age. Volunteer drivers at each meal site will deliver meals to participants who are homebound and unable to prepare their own meals.

Since last March, there has been a significant rise in needed meals. In the last quarter of 2020, in Linn County alone, 36,701 meals were served. That thoughtful gift will go a long way towards feeding people who depend on this service. Please contact Sue Forty at [sforty@ocwcog.org](mailto:sforty@ocwcog.org) to learn how you can help.

## Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The 2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was approved by the Cascades West Economic Development District (CWEDD). CWEDD is designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to work on economic development efforts in, Benton, Lane, Lincoln, and Linn Counties. CWEDD advocates for, supports, and coordinates regionally significant economic development activities in the region. The scope of this new EDA project identifies three key areas for the first year and seven total for the three year period. These key areas are:

- Build Partnerships for Regional Collaboration
- Expand Strategic Cross Sector Partnerships
- Update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Enhance Regional Visibility
- Maintain Partnerships
- Identify and Leverage Funding Sources to Increase Resiliency
- Rural Development

Visit the [CWEDD website](#) to find detailed information about the overall Development Strategy, or visit the [CEDS website](#) for more specific information on the five year road map.

## CARES Act Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Service Area

In July 2020, OCWCOG's Business Lending was awarded \$825,000 in EDA non-competitive CARES Act Revolving Loan Funds (RLF) Funds. At the time of the application, the funds could only be used for the existing EDA RLF service area: Linn and Lincoln County. At the Board of Directors meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup>, a vote was passed to include Benton County for these funds. If you know anyone that could benefit from these funds, please contact our Sr. Loan Officer, Sandra Easdale at [seasdale@ocwcog.org](mailto:seasdale@ocwcog.org).



## Press Release of the Seamless Transit Project

The Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments (OCWCOG) is pleased to announce the public launch of multiple new tools that aim to provide a seamless transit experience for travelers in the Lincoln, Benton and Linn region. This project is a collaboration between OCWCOG, Albany Transit System including the Linn-Benton Loop, Benton County Transit, Corvallis Transit System including the Philomath Connection, Lincoln County Transit, the Linn Shuttle, and the LINX of Lebanon.

Cascades West Transit and Ride Options, aka CW Ride (<https://cwide.org>), focuses on more easily connecting passengers to their final destination through improved technology and support across all of our regional transit agencies. Riders will be able to plan their trip, see when the next bus is coming at each stop, identify connections across providers, and buy tickets on the website and associated smartphone applications.



*“The goal of this project is to provide a seamless experience for people across all three counties, and help them get from point A to point B using an option other than a personal car. I’m thankful for all of the hard work put in by staff to improve transportation in the region.” Nick Meltzer, OCWCOG Transportation Programs Manager*

The new technologies mentioned include real-time Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) data, passenger predictions for bus arrival times, an app, “Transit”, for riders to plan their regional trips on public transport, the ability to purchase tickets electronically through the “Token Transit” app, and a centralized website that incorporates all these features in one place. In addition to the digital features, OCWCOG expanded their training services. Travel Training helps riders expand their ability to ride the bus safely and reliably, by working one on one with an experienced transit rider. Driver Training Programs are also offered to better equip drivers to support their riders.

*“I encourage everyone to visit CW Ride and see how to travel across our region. This project highlights the benefit of working with great regional partners and makes me proud to lead OCWCOG.” Ryan Vogt, OCWCOG Executive Director*

This project makes new technologies and resources available to our local communities, and provides free technological support to regional transit users. Keep an eye out for the new CWRide.org flyers or stickers at bus stops to utilize these new tools starting on March 30th. For more information, visit <https://cwide.org> or contact Nick Meltzer at [nmeltzer@ocwcog.org](mailto:nmeltzer@ocwcog.org).

### Current Job Openings

- Case Manager, Toledo (2 positions available)
- Case Manager, Albany
- Meals on Wheels Supervisor, Albany

To learn more, or apply, please visit:

<http://www.ocwcog.org/careers>

### Contact Information

Seniors & Disabilities Service  
(541) 967-8630

RideLine  
(541) 924-8738

Economic Development  
(541) 924-8465

General Administration  
(541) 967-8720



ADRC  
(800) 638-0510