



Our mission is to deliver innovative support to lead aging agencies as we work together to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of older people in Wisconsin.

Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 3, 2025 / 10:00 a.m.

ADRC of Portage County
1519 Water Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481
and
Microsoft Teams Conference Call

Attendees

Members Present: Dave Denomie, Kathy Gauger, Dave Lowe, Valerie Freres, Doris Bakker, Bob Best, Tony Omernik, Sheila Check-Moe

Members Not Present: Denise Sweet

Others Present: Rob Wilkinson, Board Vice-Chair; Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist; Kristi Cooley, Nutrition Program Specialist; John Schnabl, Executive Director; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Susan Wetrich, Director, Tech Connect; Lynn Riley, Dane County AAA Manager; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator

Call to Order: 10:00 a.m.

Dave Denomie, Chair

Review and Approval of October 3, 2025 Agenda

Motion by Sheila Check-Moe, seconded by Doris Bakker, to approve October 3, 2025 agenda. Motion unanimously carried.



Review and Approval of July 18, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Bob Best, seconded by Dave Lowe, to approve July 18, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Motion unanimously carried.

Public Comment:

None

Comments from Chair

Dave Denomie, Chair

- Thank you everyone who came in person, and all the hard-working employees at this ADRC. So nice to see all the people that gather in the activities they provide

GWAAR AC New Member Welcome – Tony Omernik

Nick Musson, Transportation Program Specialist

- The group introduced themselves to Tony Omernik and Tony gave a brief overview of his career. He is retired now after a career in nonprofit human service management type positions. He has been involved with ADRC Board of Directors and a steering committee for United Way. He is a certified retirement coach and is enthusiastically involved with senior volunteerism in the community.

Executive Director's Report

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- I had a training session on GWAAR, to a handful of Advisory Council members in August, on what we do, and our purpose in the aging network.
- We operate the statewide Senior Medicare Patrol program, which is a Medicare fraud awareness program, and that program is looking for volunteers, if you, or you know someone else, who might be interested. Typically, those volunteers will go around and give presentations around Medicare fraud or will sit at exhibit tables at conferences and discuss what the program is and does. So once again, let me know if



you have someone who is potentially interested in becoming a volunteer for that program.

- We also have what's called a Veteran Self-directed Services program, which is very similar to the IRIS program here in Wisconsin, but for veterans. The VA sends us referrals and we take those referrals and make them as clients of ours. Ultimately what we do with that program is help veterans hire family members and friends to provide care. The Madison VA has now added another dozen slots to what we currently have. We're going to be well over 200 individuals enrolled in that program coming up very shortly. With all this growth, we are now hiring for another VA Care Consultant.
- Next Friday we will have a board meeting, which takes place bimonthly, where we will discuss our 2024 audit, and RFP for a new audit firm. We are also currently in the process of deciding who will get a grant to provide a legal services program to older adults. This program will start in January of 2026.
- We have a few board members whose terms are coming up at the end of the year or the following year, so if you know of anyone who might be interested in sitting on a board of directors, please let me know and I would be happy to talk with them about it.

GWAAR Nutrition Program Update

Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager

- We have 3 staff members in the nutrition area which cover GWAAR's service area, 70 counties and 11 tribes.
- GWAAR received a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Elements of Anthem Division, to develop a standardized recipe bank, that enhances meal quality for senior nutrition programs serving GWAAR's 70 counties and the 11 tribes. This grant allowed us to bring on a consultant by the name of Kimberly Gould, who's a registered dietitian and has been working with the GWAAR nutrition team to research, test and also enter the recipes into this database. Recipes include low sodium, low saturated fat, vegetarian, diabetic friendly and culturally diverse. Recipes have been added since June, so currently we have 150 total recipes in the bank and 28% of them are culturally diverse.

- One of the things you may be hearing or seeing in your community is something called pop-up dining sites. We have our traditional congregate sites where folks come into our nutrition program sites together for meals. A new idea that was developed and outside of the box, we call pop-up dining centers. What the pop-up center does is bring in the congregate food socialization and connection to areas and communities where there isn't a permanent congregate site. These take place in temporary community spaces, park shelters, restaurants, churches and libraries. One of the nice things about them is we are able to reach rural or underserved areas. They do, however, have to follow the Older Americans Act nutrition program guidelines.
- The nutrition team and John had a chance to attend the Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors Fall Conference, which was held in Forest County Potawatomi, on tribal land at the casino. The day before the conference we had an opportunity to tour the tribal farm, which included produce and livestock. In the evening there was a cooking class for all the participants. The GWAAR nutrition team had an opportunity to give updates on innovative projects and talk a little bit about our meal prioritization tool and also shared some new technical assistance initiatives that are coming up.
- Nutrition Program Specialist, Lori Fernandez, retired on September 5th, however we are lucky to replace her with Kristi Cooley, former Nutrition Manager of Portage County.

Kristi Cooley:

- Kristi has lived in Portage County for over 30 years and worked at Mercy Hospital in Janesville, before coming to Portage County as the Nutrition Manager of the ADRC.
- I have been learning, absorbing, providing some technical assistance, but also really trying to get out to the counties that I'm going to work with. My plans are to continue to visit all the other counties assigned to me and get a sense of things and what their needs are.
- We use a SharePoint site to disperse all kinds of useful and relative technical assistance to county nutrition programs. We're developing a survey to send to the counties, so we can ensure that that's working well or not so well for them and how we can help them better. I'm just really thankful to be part of the opportunity to serve seniors and help people age independently where they want to.

Tech Connect Presentation

Susan Wetrich, Director of Tech Connect

- Susan Wetrich, Director of Tech Connect gave a very informative PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of what Tech Connect is and what their purpose is in the community of older adults. Their programs are invaluable, very popular and helpful. Tech Connect helps older adults (50+) become more comfortable with technology through various services. They host one-on-one workshops where you can bring your device (phone, iPad) and work with knowledgeable tech trainers to answer questions and provide assistance, or speak with center staff to schedule an appointment. Registration is required for Tech Connect classes and BYOD sessions. Sign up is easy by simply calling your local center. Tech Connect staff are specially trained to provide support and instruction to older adults. Class sizes are kept low to ensure appropriate support for each learner. Hands-on classes offer participants the opportunity to learn and practice with the support of a skilled instructor. Courses are five- and ten-week hands on programs that engage participants to learn the course topic. For more detailed information, please see Susan's PowerPoint presentation.

Advocacy Update

Nick Musson, on behalf of Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

A very comprehensive advocacy report written by Janet Zander, was sent to Advisory Council members. Janet was not able to attend but asked that a few things be called out and given extra attention. Please see Janet's written report for details.

Topics covered:

- Healthy aging grants AB 410 and SB410 are grants for fall prevention awareness and initiatives. These grants are very important when it comes to falls prevention. A statistic to note is there was 31% reduced falls of those that participate in these course offerings and actually new data that's out say it's actually closer to 50% of those that participate in these courses. What would we like you to do is to take a look, to see if your senator and assembly representatives are signed on as sponsors or co-sponsors on the bill. If your legislators are signed on, please send them a thank you and your appreciation for signing on. And if not, if you could contact them and ask them to support this legislation to help reduce preventable falls in Wisconsin.

- Volunteer driver protection legislation. This is legislation to prevent insurance companies from denying, dropping coverage or increasing rates for volunteer drivers. Please send us your impactful stories so we can share them with legislators. Good stuff coming out of lots of discussion. We are going to be working and starting a coalition in support of this effort, so I'm going to be working and putting together a letter reaching out to as many different organizations and agencies as I can to sign on, so that if we get draft legislation, we can show that we're coordinated and have a group of agencies and organizations that support this effort. We wanted to make sure you're in the know as there are a lot of really good things happening as we continue to push this request for legislation forward.
- We'd like to bring to your attention the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services. Earlier this month, four new speaker Tasks Forces were announced, including the Speaker's Task Force on Elder Services. This particular group for Elder Services will work to identify ways to improve the quality of life for Wisconsin's senior population. The task force will focus specifically on services that help seniors maintain independence in their own homes, encourage social interaction and community engagement to combat isolation and loneliness as well as prioritize physical well-being and financial independence and prevent physical and financial elder abuse. Janet wanted to encourage all of you to attend any public hearings held. A Taskforce members list is forthcoming and will be shared with the Advisory Council.
- Janet also wanted to address the government shutdown and the programs it is affecting. The shutdown is going to impact approximately 750,000 federal workers. Some will work without pay, such as active-duty troops, air traffic control, and federal law enforcement. In the past, congress has traditionally approved retroactive payments for these employees, once the government reopens, but this does not prevent the immediate financial difficulties they face. Approximately 60% of the federal funding is mandatory spending and unaffected by the shutdown, programs like Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid which have mandatory funding continue because they are authorized by permanent law. However, customer service wait times may increase in some administration functions. There could be delayed funding for Older American Act programs and other social service programs, as well as other programs that agencies funded by discretionary funding, such as SNAP, national parks and museums, public health initiatives, and federal housing assistance program. Each governmental department has its own contingency plan, so we can only wait to see what happens as things change up daily.



Aging Plan Updates

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- As aging plan updates go, all of the consultants are working on their goals and there will be more to share at future meetings.

Future Meeting Topics

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- Bring Lisa Druin in to give a presentation on the VA Program housed under GWAAR.
- Bring in new employee, Donna Rosner, to give a presentation on her specialty, elder abuse.
- Sheila Check-Moe asked if we could invite a former state representative to come speak to the Advisory Council. Nick and Janet will work with Sheila on her idea.
- Please don't hesitate to reach out to Nick Musson to request ask about topics you'd be interested in and learning more about.

Member Sharing

All

- The importance of inviting legislators to the ADRC's to educate them on important topics affecting the older population.
- Going to county board meetings to learn and educate others about important topics affecting the older population.
- Invite legislators to special honorary days calling attention to or related to the older or aging population. Story telling is powerful for legislators.

Adjournment

Next Meeting Date: ***November 14, 2025 Teams Virtual Meeting***



Future 2025 Meeting Dates:

February 20, 2026

May 15, 2026

July 17, 2026

September 18, 2026

November 13, 2026

Recorder: *Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*