

## THE NORTH CAROLINA SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATURE

The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (STHL) convened its first session of 2019 at the Rural Center in Raleigh, North Carolina on March 12-13. The all-embracing theme, advocating for seasoned seniors, was apparent with each speaker. Seniors are an increasing part of our population and there is an obvious decline in services and supports, as well as caregivers.

Joyce Massey-Smith, Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) gave an update of her Division. She recognized Dorothy Crawford, a member of the STHL who will be 101 in April, and shared with the group that the Dorothy R. Crawford Award was given this year in Ms. Crawford's honor. This will be the first award named after a woman. The Director also shared information about Adult Protective Service (APS) and stated that county departments of social services received 30,000 complaints this past year, which is a significant increase since last year.

Later in the program, the STHL's Past Speaker, Althea Taylor-Jones, was presented the Andrus award by Charmaine Fuller-Cooper, Associate State Director, NC AARP. Charmaine Fuller-Cooper spoke to the group with a profound statement, "One person can make a difference." She shared that there were 1.3 million unpaid caregivers in North Carolina. AARP is supporting them with the North Carolina Caregivers Act (House Bill 269/Senate Bill 161) known as the three I's.

1. IDENTIFY caregivers on hospital admissions.
2. INFORM caregivers.
3. INCLUDE and INSTRUCT caregivers upon discharge.

AARP has also partnered with the United Way to provide a means of helping people find healthcare in rural areas by establishing, "DIAL 211."

Roger Manus, Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging, gave a thought-provoking presentation on advocacy. Manus stated, "The advocate must recognize that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. We are resources of the Older Americans Act (OAA), a part of a larger movement that will continue long after we are gone. We devote ourselves to something we will never see the conclusion of this lifetime."

The members met their legislators the second day of the meeting at the General Assembly and advocated for the STHL's top five priorities including:

1. Increase funding for North Carolina Home and Community Care Block Grant.
2. Maintain and Increase Funding for Senior Centers.
3. Increase funding for Project CARE (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty).
4. Strengthen and Fund North Carolina's Adult Protective Program (APS).
5. Staff-to-Patient Ratios in Nursing Homes.

The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature promotes Citizens involvement and Advocacy concerning aging issues before the General Assembly, as well as the needs of older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly. For more information please visit us on Facebook or visit our website at: <http://www.ncsthl.org>.