

# AZ LINKS NEWSLETTER

www.azlinks.gov



## Happy New Year – 2015 Arrives!

There is much to be excited about as we move forward into 2015. Arizona has a new Governor, and we most likely will see other changes as that leadership transition continues. You'll discover as you read this newsletter that AZ Links Partners are already busy serving Arizonans in the new year, with a Conference on Aging scheduled this month in Yuma, and an Expo in Tucson in February. In March we are anticipating the launch of the new AZ Links website, and later in the Spring, ADRC Regional Partnerships will be holding meetings to review how each region will help Arizona serve families dealing with Alzheimer's Disease as we strive to create a dementia-capable long-term care system.

- David Besst, ADRC Project Director

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Keynote speakers of the event include Dr. Marisa Menchola, Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona Departments of Psychiatry and Neurology, and Dr. Jeanette Wendt, Research Director at NNS Clinical Research. Additionally, the event will feature three educational tracks: General Aging Issues, Elder Abuse, and Caregiver. Topics of discussion for breakout sessions include "Achieving Sustainable Balance," "Too Many Treasures – An Overview of Hoarding Disorder," and "Demystifying and Transforming Dying – Exploring the Good Death." Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in the Virtual Dementia Tour and visit information and resource booths.

**Register now to receive the early bird discount!**  
**For more information regarding sponsorship, vendor booth opportunities and registration please contact Jacqueline Romero at (928) 217-7158 or [jacqueline@wacog.com](mailto:jacqueline@wacog.com).**



## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Region IV Conference on Aging

*Submitted by Jaqueline Romero, Program Development Specialist, WACOG Area Agency on Aging*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Region IV Conference on Aging, hosted by Western Arizona Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging, will be held on **Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015** at the Pivot Point Conference Center in Yuma, AZ.

## SAVE THE DATE



**NEW DATE!**  
**Saturday, February 28, 2015**  
 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
 Casino Del Sol  
 5655 W. Valencia Road

BENEFITING PIMA COUNCIL ON AGING

*Submitted By Kimberley Hoidal, Development Coordinator, Pima Council on Aging*

**The Pima Council on Aging (PCOA) 2015 Ages 'n Stages Active Adult Lifestyle Expo** is a celebration of the quality of active living only available in Pima County. This is a FREE and entertaining event for all ages, showcasing the best our community has to offer.

There will be more than 100 exhibitors, a wide range of fun things to do, live musical entertainment, and informative seminars. **PCOA Ages 'n Stages Expo** proceeds will benefit **PCOA, the Area Agency on Aging Region II**, providing information, assistance, advocacy, and nutritional and social services for older adults and their families who reside in Pima County. For further information, contact **Kimberley Hoidal** at **520-305-3401**, or [khoidal@pcoa.org](mailto:khoidal@pcoa.org).

## Updates from Social Security

*Submitted By Jack Burns, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist in Arizona*

### Social Security Announces 1.7 Percent Benefit Increase for 2015

The Social Security Administration announced that monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for nearly 64 million Americans will increase 1.7 percent in 2015. The 1.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 58 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2015. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2014. The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Social Security Act outlines how the COLA is calculated. To read more about the COLA, please visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola). To learn more about other changes in 2015, please refer to the Social Security fact sheet at [www.socialsecurity.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2015.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2015.html).

### Are Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits subject to federal income tax?

No. SSI payments are not subject to federal taxes. If you get SSI, you will not receive an annual form SSA-1099. However, your Social Security benefits may be subject to income tax. Learn more at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

## Grant Awarded to the Arizona Loan\$ for Assistive Technology Program!

*Submitted by Amina Donna Kruck, VP/ Advocacy Programs, Arizona Bridge to Independent Living – ABIL*

Congratulations are in order for the Arizona Technology Access Program. This program was recently awarded a \$663,000 grant from the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to expand their financial loan program, the **Arizona Loan\$ for Assistive Technology (AzLAT)**. This means there is more money to loan to you!

I think AzLAT is one of the best kept secrets (next to ABIL) in Arizona. AzLAT provides affordable loans to persons with disabilities who need a range of assistive technology devices. Need a loan to buy hearing aids or that scooter you really want but is not covered by your health care plan? Need adaptive software for your computer or other devices that could make living with your vision, hearing or mobility disability easier? AzLAT is a federally funded program that can provide loans to people with disabilities that might not be able to find funding any other way. Payment arrangements are reasonable for people on fixed incomes. The new funding will allow AzLAT to increase the number and size of its loans, enhance outreach efforts to increase consumer awareness of the program beyond Maricopa County, and develop credit building resources to help potential loan applicants manage finances and improve their credit.

The Arizona Technology Access Program also has the SEED Loan\$ program that provides affordable business loans to persons with disabilities who telework, or as a self-employment opportunity for those who need assistive technology and business equipment. For information, call 1-800-477-9921, or visit the website: [www.aztap.org](http://www.aztap.org).

## Ticket to Work Website Easier to Use

*Submitted by Amina Donna Kruck, VP/ Advocacy Programs, Arizona Bridge to Independent Living – ABIL*

Just in time for its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Social Security Administration has launched a redesigned website for the Ticket to Work program at [www.chooseworkttw.net/](http://www.chooseworkttw.net/). The website is part of Social Security's efforts to help people with disabilities who want to find and keep a job to reduce or eliminate their need for cash benefits. The website is the place for beneficiaries to learn about the Ticket to Work program, which provides free employment support services to Social Security disability beneficiaries.

The site has an improved layout and is now even easier to use. It also offers more information to support disability beneficiaries on their journey to financial independence. The new features of the improved website include a responsive design that works with smartphones and tablets. There is an improved "Find Help" tool which makes it easier to find Ticket to Work service providers. You will be able to type in the zip code or state to find service providers in that area or use the filters on search results for provider type or disabilities served. The new "Help Me Choose" tool asks a series of questions to help beneficiaries decide if they are ready for the Ticket to Work program, and what type of service provider would be a good fit. There are self-paced tutorials where beneficiaries can learn more about the Ticket to Work program. There is also a new "Find a Job" section. Though Ticket to Work is not a direct hiring program, it can help beneficiaries find job search resources and special employment programs for people with disabilities. The "Find a Job" section also provides information about opportunities available to people with disabilities in the federal government or with federal government contractors through Section 503 hiring.

# SPOTLIGHT...

## Arizona's Graying Frontier

*Submitted by Elisa Davis, AAA Director, WACOG Area Agency on Aging*

WACOG shared an article that was published on December 3, 2014, on the website Al Jazeera English. The article highlights La Paz County as well as Arizona's aging population. The title of the article is "**Arizona's Graying Frontier Offers Glimpse of US Challenges Ahead.**" The article mentions La Paz County and addresses that a third of the residents in La Paz County are seniors, which "offers a test case as more baby boomers nationwide retire." The article was too lengthy to place in this newsletter, but the link to the article is below. Check it out.

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/12/2/arizona>

## ACDL Board of Director Announces New Executive Director

*Submitted by Amina Donna Kruck, VP/ Advocacy Programs, Arizona Bridge to Independent Living – ABIL*

Tony DiRienzi, Board Chair, posted that the Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) Board of Directors is proud to announce the appointment of Jose de Jesus "J.J." V. Rico as its new executive director. J.J. has worked at ACDL since 2001, initially as a Staff Attorney and subsequently as Litigation Director. Since June 2014 he has served as the center's Interim Executive Director.

J.J. has dedicated his legal career to advancing the rights of people with disabilities through litigating for systemic changes, collaborating to train and educate others about disability-related laws and policies, and fulfilling ACDL's mission. Among his other accomplishments, J.J. has served as the Chair of the University of Arizona's Hispanic Advisory Council, worked as a Fellow for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in San Francisco, CA and served as an intern for Senator Edward M. Kennedy in Washington D.C.

Please welcome J.J. Rico as he works with ACDL staff to advance the disability rights movement in Arizona.



Submitted by Amina Donna Kruck, VP/ Advocacy Programs, Arizona Bridge to Independent Living – ABIL

To register: <http://2015preretirementseminar.eventbrite.com>

## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN



### WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW MAY SURPRISE YOU AT RETIREMENT

*"What To Know And Where To Go"*

A FREE informational forum for people approaching 55+

Presented by the Arizona Beneficiary Coalition in collaboration  
with Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG).

#### FEATURING A PANEL OF EXPERTS

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Social Security Administration; Department of Labor/Employee Benefits Security Administration; Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Aging & Adult Services; HSAG; Arizona Bridge to Independent Living; Area Agency on Aging, Region One.

#### WHEN

Saturday,  
January 17, 2015  
8 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

#### WHERE

Health Services Advisory Group  
3133 East Camelback Road, Suite 100  
Phoenix, AZ 85016

#### COST

There is no cost  
to attend.

### REGISTER AT:

<http://2015preretirementseminar.eventbrite.com>

**Accommodations:** Please don't wear fragrances! Events are accessible in compliance with ADA guidelines. Sign language interpreters will be provided as well as material in alternate format, upon request. (Please request accommodations seven days in advance.) For general information or questions, contact Glen Spencer at 602.264.2255.

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## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

**New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center** in Prescott, Arizona, held their annual Christmas Potluck and Open House in December. This event was attended by staff, volunteers, clients and community members. Each year everyone enjoys singing Christmas carols, games, jokes, lots of delicious food, socializing and laughter. Chuck is the happy party participant pictured and life of the party. During the group singing of the 12 Days of Christmas, Mary D. was the best partridge in a pear tree ever!



## Newsletter Submissions

Dear AZ Link Partners,

**This is your newsletter** – let us know what you would like to see included.

We are especially interested in hearing about regional partners and the work they do. Please send any news or updates, special projects, activities, calendar pages, any photos or brief notices that you may want to include in the newsletter to: [TPankey@azdes.gov](mailto:TPankey@azdes.gov).

Next newsletter: April 2015

Deadline for submissions: March 13, 2015

***Happy New Year!***

## New Horizons Accomplishments for 2014

*Submitted by Liz Toone, Executive Director of New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center*

Among the many accomplishments that New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center's small staff achieved during the last fiscal year, here are a few of the ones for which I am most proud:

- Staff participated in 700.50 hours of community activities. That equals a solid month of round the clock activities!
- Transportation provided **22,810** rides and traveled **265,146** miles – that equals the equivalent 17.77 trips to China and back! (Hong Kong is 7,457 miles from Prescott Valley.)
- Staff provided 487 peer counseling services.
- Staff provided 1653 Information and Referral services.
- Staff provided Independent Living Skills Training and Life Skills Training to 94 people, and helped 31 people become gainfully employed!