

News Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Our Commitment of Service to the Citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish

My name is Jennifer Moisant and I am the new Board Chairwoman of the East Baton Rouge Council on Aging (EBRCOA). I along with 8 other volunteer leaders have recently joined the Council's board of directors. In fact, 70% of our board is made up of new board members. The Council has been in the news in recent months, the subject of questions and concerns raised by the media and public officials in the wake of last fall's vote of the people to significantly expand the resources available to the Council to pursue its mission.

The people of East Baton Rouge deserve a Council on Aging that operates transparently and with accountability. Put simply, the people must feel confident that their money is delivering the utmost value to East Baton Rouge seniors. With that obligation in mind, I offer this open letter to the citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish to make clear the Council's mission, its portfolio of current services, and our commitment to continuously strengthen the Council's management and governance in service of the needs of our seniors.

Our Mission

The East Baton Rouge Council on Aging is a Louisiana nonprofit organization established in 1973 for the general purpose of serving senior citizens of the Parish of East Baton Rouge. More specifically, the Council's bylaws describe this purpose to include: analysis of relevant facts and statistics that help explain conditions impacting seniors; keeping abreast of the latest developments relevant to seniors; conducting public meetings; making recommendations to the proper authorities regarding needed improvements and additional resources to promote the wellbeing of seniors; assisting and cooperating with the government and other organizations serving seniors; and developing and implementing services and programs for seniors.

Our Service Portfolio

The EBRCOA offers a significant portfolio of programs and services for seniors in need, including:

Meals on Wheels

Home-delivered meals to homebound seniors at a rate of 2,650 per week.

Hot Meals Served at Sites or Centers – Congregate Meals

Hot meals offered at 15 different sites/senior centers throughout the parish.

Information and Assistance

Trained counselors are available to answer questions, provide thorough needs assessments, make appropriate service recommendations, refer individuals to other EBRCOA-related services, and provide information on other community-wide agencies/services available to the aging population.

Personal Care/Homemakers

Trained caregivers provide in-home care; house cleaning; laundry; respite; etc.

Family Caregiver Support

Assistance for caregivers tending to individuals 60+ years old.

Health Screens

Comprehensive screenings at each senior center: glucose, immunizations, nutrition, referrals, etc.

Insurance Counseling

Including Medicaid applications as appropriate.

Utility Assistance

Assistance with accessing cable, electricity, and other utilities.

The need and demand for these services is great. Some examples from fiscal year 2015-16:

122,958

Meals on Wheels served

105,686

Hot meals served through 15 sites/senior centers across the parish

392

Seniors trained in nutritional/health education

492

Seniors trained in health promotion/disease prevention

793

Seniors in attendance at our Thanksgiving Dinner and Dance

EBRCOA also has waiting lists for services including: 624 for respite/personal care; 489 for meals on wheels; and 249 for homemaker services. The additional funding recently approved by voters will eliminate these waiting lists beginning in 2018.

Our Commitment Going Forward

There is perhaps no obligation of civilized society that is more solemn than to provide appropriate care and concern for our seniors in need. For over forty years, the East Baton Rouge Council on Aging has had the privilege of helping meet that joy-filled obligation. Our efforts have been imperfect. Mistakes have been made, and problems have obscured the Council’s good work. In response, the Council has reviewed and revised policies, procedures, and practices to facilitate greater transparency and guarantee accountability. That effort is ongoing and continuous.

On behalf of the EBRCOA board of directors and staff, I commit to the citizens of East Baton Rouge that the Council will work tirelessly with community leaders and partner organizations to deliver high-quality services to all of our seniors in need ...and do so in a manner that earns the confidence of our generous Baton Rouge community.

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The EBRCOA is a nonprofit that was founded in 1973 to serve seniors (persons over 60 years of age) who live in East Baton Rouge Parish, through 15 senior centers and 18 service programs. EBRCOA is also an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) subject to oversight from Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs and the Louisiana Legislative Auditor. The organization leverages federal funds through the Older American's Act, state, local, and private philanthropic dollars to expand and improve services offered to seniors in East Baton Rouge.