

**Media Contact**

Emma Fried-Cassorla

Director of Communications and Programming

Office: (541) 323-0432

Cell: (215) 313-5582

[efried-cassorla@councilonaging.org](mailto:efried-cassorla@councilonaging.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Council on Aging of Central Oregon Named Recipient of Prestigious  
Aging Innovations Award from USAging**

July 19th, 2023 - Bend, OR - The Council on Aging of Central Oregon (CoA) is thrilled to announce that its [Caring Connections](#) program received a 2023 Aging Innovations Award from USAging. Caring Connections is designed to combat social isolation by offering older adults throughout Central Oregon an opportunity to receive weekly phone calls from a volunteer match. The program was one of sixteen local aging programs across the country to receive Innovations honors during USAging's 48th Annual Conference and Tradeshow.

The 2023 USAging Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards, supported by Caregiving.com and Cumulus, recognizes USAging's Area Agency on Aging and Title VI Native American Aging Program members that have found new and innovative ways to support older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers as they live in their homes and communities. The awards honored traditional and new strategies in a range of categories, including Caregiving, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Nutrition, Public Health and Vaccinations, Social Engagement, and more.

“The Aging Innovations & Achievement Awards are a timely reminder of the evolving role USAging members play in the planning, development, coordination and delivery of aging and other home and community-based services in nearly every community in the United States,” said USAging CEO Sandy Markwood. “The AAAs and Title VI programs we honor today have set a standard for innovation and creativity in helping vulnerable older adults live with independence and dignity in their homes and communities.”

The Caring Connections program started in 2020 in response to increasing isolation during the pandemic. Social isolation and loneliness are so prevalent now that on a national level, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy declared, “Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an underappreciated public health crisis that has harmed individual and societal health.” In order to combat isolation, the Caring Connections program matches seniors with a volunteer to receive regular telephone calls to create meaningful connections, provide safety checks, and support family caregivers. The program will be expanding over the next year to in-person visits and events to facilitate deeper friendships between the volunteers and their participant match.

Cassie Regimbal, CoA Executive Director says, “winning the USAging Aging Innovations & Achievement Award is a recognition of how crucial this program is to the older adult population. Our team has worked tirelessly to establish and grow this program, and we look forward to expanding it to more isolated seniors in the coming months.”

### **About USAging**

USAging is the national association representing and supporting the network of Area Agencies on Aging and advocating for the Title VI Native American Aging Programs. Our members help older adults and people with disabilities throughout the United States live with optimal health, well-being, independence and dignity in their homes and communities. USAging is dedicated to supporting the success of our members through advancing public policy, sparking innovation, strengthening the capacity of our members, raising their visibility and working to drive excellence in the fields of aging and home and community-based services. For more information about USAging, AAAs or Title VI programs, visit [www.usaging.org](http://www.usaging.org).

### **About the Council on Aging of Central Oregon**

Since 1975, the Council on Aging of Central Oregon (CoA) has served as the designated Area Agency on Aging for Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties, offering adults aged 60 and older and their loved ones a range of support services. CoA advocates for, empowers, and guides older adults and their loved ones to live with independence and well-being. For more information, visit [www.councilonaging.org](http://www.councilonaging.org).

#####