Council on Aging to Launch New Geriatric Care Division in February

[January 17, 2014 - Mentor, OH] - The Lake County Council on Aging has announced the launch of a new division, the Geriatric Care Management Department. “I am so excited about this development for the Council on Aging and the seniors we serve. We believe this department will help address an identified unmet need in our community - a growing population of older clients with complex medical, cognitive and social needs, particularly those seniors with high risk dementia,” said Joseph Tomsick, CEO of the Council on Aging. “In meeting with partner agencies last summer, we found that although Lake County has many incredible interventions available for seniors, we do not have a comprehensive, coordinated geriatric care program. As a result, the many needs of seniors 85 and over, and their families, are commonly unmet.”

Census results show the fastest growing segment of the total population are those 80 and over. Their growth rate is twice that of those 65 and over, and almost 4 times that for the total population. Locally, Lake County has seen the number of 85+ year-olds increase from 47.3% of the total senior population in 2000, to 58.5% in the 2010 census. “While the entire country is getting older, the picture is very clear in Lake County where the 85+ year-olds are the largest growing segment, and statistics show that this will continue to be a future trend. I believe that our actions today will greatly help those of us in our 50’s & 60’s who are caregivers to our own parents,” Tomsick added.

Beginning in mid-February, the new department will be led by Adrienne Green, MSW, LISW-S, who will hold the title of Department Director. Ms. Green has a Masters in Social Work from Cleveland State University and Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Ohio University. For the past 13 years, she has been employed at the Center for Geriatric Psychiatry at Lake Health West Medical Center.

"I am so thrilled to be joining the team at the Lake County Council on Aging, and look forward to assisting in the expansion of the important services provided by the agency," said Green. "As the older adult population has grown by leaps and bounds, so has the complexity of the care needs for the seniors served by the Council on Aging. I have spent much of my career advocating for at-risk older adults. I'm eager to use my experience in community social services, mental health, and hospital-based care to assist some of Lake County's most vulnerable citizens, as well as the people who love them. I look forward to partnering with the many organizations and community leaders who share the goal of supporting older adults in Lake County."

The Geriatric Care Management team will focus its efforts on expanding the Council on Aging’s current level of case management and by contracting with Lake Health to assess seniors in great need in Lake County. Four specific areas that the new department will focus on include:

- **Geriatric Assessment Program** – The Council on Aging will oversee and serve as the administrator to Lake Health’s Geriatric Assessment Program (GAP). Designed to address the emotional, social and functional health of seniors, this outpatient assessment utilizes highly-skilled Lake Health professionals who perform a detailed evaluation of physical history and medication; screen for memory loss, depression, anxiety, social and functional status; provide a home safety evaluation and when requested, a driving simulator to help older adults improve their road skills. Results are analyzed, an intervention strategy is recommended, and a report is created for family members about behaviors and other concerns.
- **Geriatric Care Management** – Licensed social workers from the Council on Aging, equipped with new training and tools to provide comprehensive, coordinated care to triage, plan and manage the long-term treatment of seniors who have multiple medical, psychological, and social needs, as well as offer resources and support to their families and caregivers.

- **Traditional Case Management** – Licensed social workers who consult with Lake County seniors, families and caregivers and help them maintain their independence, connect to resources and services, and work on issues that threaten self-sufficiency.

- **Community Referral** – The key to serving the client in the broadest possible context is to save time for the family, simplify the search for help, and provide effective collaboration with an extended family of Lake County agencies, each with different specialties. Whenever necessary, the Geriatric Care Management Department will work to properly refer seniors to community agencies to improve the health of the clients and the community.

“As our senior population continues to age into more advanced years, their needs have become more complex. We recognize the higher incidence of dementia and the related safety issues that our seniors are dealing with on a daily basis. As a result, the LCCoA board and leadership have committed to providing care and services to our vulnerable seniors through the development of this new Geriatric Care Management division and the Lake Health Geriatric Assessment Program,” said Dr. Lori Stevic-Rust, PhD, ABPP, board president of the Council on Aging. “We are proud to be partnering with so many great organizations in the county who share the mission of serving our seniors.”

Benefits that accrue to older adults with complex problems who are being managed by an interdisciplinary geriatric care team include greater maintenance of current functionality, and fewer hospital readmissions.

“Family members are often overwhelmed, uncertain where to turn for help, and often struggle to find the right resources to help them navigate their way. The Council on Aging provides comprehensive support for seniors and their families to make the journey easier through the system,” said Gary Robinson, vice president of government and community affairs for Lake Health. "Collaborating with the Council on Aging provides additional expertise and resources to the benefit of the seniors we mutually serve.”

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**About Lake County Council on Aging:** The Lake County Council on Aging (LCCoA) has been serving Lake County’s seniors, their families and caregivers since 1972. The Agency strives to enhance quality of life through education, advocacy, service and support. The agency’s priority is to help older adults remain in their own homes longer, healthier and more safely. For more information, visit [www.lccoa.org](http://www.lccoa.org).