

# News Release



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## **Commonwealth Council on Aging announces 2025 Best Practices Awards**

(RICHMOND, Va.) — The Fellowship Fresh program of [Fellowship Square](#) in Reston, Virginia, has won the \$5,500 first-place Best Practices Award from the Commonwealth Council on Aging.

Fellowship Square, a leading provider of affordable housing and services for low-income seniors in the Washington, D.C., metro area, serves more than 850 older adults, many of whom live on Social Security incomes averaging less than \$10,000 per year. The organization recognizes the difficult choices seniors face, often forced to choose between healthcare costs and essential groceries.

Fellowship Fresh helps bridge this gap by providing nutritious food to seniors, enabling them to maintain their health, independence and ability to age in place. The program partners with community organizations, retailers, restaurants and volunteers to donate and hand-deliver fresh and shelf-stable groceries.

“More than 5 million American seniors face food insecurity – driven by fixed incomes, health conditions that can make cooking or shopping difficult, and transportation challenges,” said Christy Zeitz, Chief Executive Officer of Fellowship Square.

“Working in partnership with our volunteers, community partners, and donors, we launched Fellowship Fresh to address the food insecurity issues we were seeing in our own communities, with residents commonly struggling to balance grocery costs with healthcare costs. We are honored to be recognized by the Commonwealth Council on Aging and hope the award will shed light on our community-based solution that is making a difference in the battle against food insecurity.”

The Commonwealth Council on Aging advises the governor and General Assembly on issues affecting Virginia’s 1.9 million residents age 60 and older. It recognizes organizations with innovative programs that can be replicated statewide. The council evaluates nominees based

on seven criteria, including community impact, innovation, outcomes and promotion of aging in the community.

### **Additional Award Winners**

**Second Place – \$3,500:** [The Beat Goes On: A Community Choir Project](#) – An intergenerational choir that includes individuals living with dementia, their care partners, college students, faculty, staff, and community members. The program is part of the Engagement Center for Creative Aging at Virginia Tech.

**Third Place – \$2,500:** [Virginia HEAR—Helping Elders Access Resources—Elder Justice and Ageism Program](#) – A video-based program that educates Virginians on elder justice and ageism through a multidisciplinary, community-based approach.

### **Honorable Mentions:**

- [Lake of the Woods Living Independently in Our Community \(LOWLINC\)](#) Safety and Wellness for Independent Living Program
- [Insight Memory Care Center’s](#) Meet Me: Community Outings
- [Peninsula Area Agency on Aging’s](#) AGE (Advocacy for Generational Equity) Program

“This year’s nominated and winning programs truly demonstrate the power of community and connection,” said Carla Hesseltine, chair of the Commonwealth Council on Aging. “As we become more aware of the profound impact of loneliness and social isolation, it’s critical to highlight and celebrate creative initiatives that bring people together—whether through the arts, cultural programs, or services that help individuals age in place with dignity and support.”

The council will hold recognition ceremonies and a virtual webinar with the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging later this spring and summer to highlight the 2025 winners.

For more information about this year’s Best Practices Award winners or the Commonwealth Council on Aging, visit <https://vda.virginia.gov/boardsandcouncils.htm>.

The council thanks Dominion Energy and AARP Virginia for their financial support of the awards.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit [dars.virginia.gov](https://dars.virginia.gov).