

Meet the Finance Director

By Kathleen Codinha



I have only been at the COG for a little over a year, but in that short amount of time nobody has earned my respect and admiration more than Sue Forty, our Finance Director. “Why?” You might ask. Does she leap tall buildings with a single bound? Is she faster than a speeding bullet? Although she doesn’t wear a Super Woman symbol on her shirt, she has pulled off some incredible feats and has a heart of gold.

Prior to 2002, the COG was out-sourcing its financial services and decided to bring them in-house. Sue was approached by COG’s new Finance Director at that time, a former colleague from Benton County Health Department, and was wooed away by an offer to work at the COG as a Senior Accountant.

“Working for an agency that does so much good in the community was a no brainer.”

Sue’s inquisitive mind lead her to continually ask questions and to be given more responsibility within the finance department. Her quest to learn wasn’t limited to just her job; she wanted to know more about contracts and payroll as well. Her attention to detail with innovative thinking resulted in her promotion to Finance Director in 2014. In the past several months, she suggested streamlining the budget process and presented her recommendations to the Board of Directors. All were in favor of saving time and effort, while producing a product that is more accurate. Her current project is putting together a Contract and Procurement training for employees. Her contracts team will be rolling training out at the end of the month, department by department.

“Over the 19 years I have had the pleasure of working at the COG I have seen many faces come and go and each and every one has had their own story that has evolved and made the agency into what we are today.”

If you were in a meeting with Sue as she talks about her department and the functions within, it’s very obvious she is passionate about her job, and always has the COG’s best interest. COVID has taken out many businesses this past year but Sue and her team have utilized every resource at hand to keep the agency out of financial worries. While many businesses were focusing on surviving, her focus was on thriving, today, and in the future. At the last Board of Directors’ meeting, she presented several Reserve Policies to keep the agency running in the event of major downturns.

“I have always seen everyone as my equal. Each person that I meet deserves the same considerations and respect.”

When asked what she likes most about working at the COG, she replied, “It’s the people!! During my tenure with the agency I have met some of the most companionate, caring and amazing people. There is not a day that goes by that I am not truly amazed by the selflessness that we enjoy.”

When asked what her thoughts were about the “new normal”, her wisdom and compassionate nature came through:

“There are many things to consider and learn in the “new normal”; it’s a new behavior and growth opportunity. While all new things come with some apprehension and unrest it will soon be the normal and no longer new. We have all learned to smile with our eyes, hug from a distance, and greet with our elbows. We’ve learned to recognize when someone is in need, has been hurt, or needs to just be. This challenge and opportunity will be recognized as we continue to provide the best support and services to one another and the community as a whole.”

Sue will be retiring in January 2022. She said one of the biggest challenges will be to transfer 20 years of history and knowledge to her replacement and the staff that will still be working at COG. She has worked hard to earn and keep the trust of her co-workers, Board of Directors, and community members. When our Super Woman flies off into the sunset, she will enjoy the great outdoors with her family and pets.

COVID-19 Updates

Good news for [Lincoln and Benton County](#): they have reached the lower risk stage with over 65% of the population having been vaccinated. This translates to more businesses being open with adjusted maximum capacity standards. Linn County is not out of the woods, however, they are still at high risk. They need [14,780](#) additional people to become vaccinated to reach 65% and move into the lower risk stage.

On May 18, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) released updated guidance for masking and physical distancing throughout the state.

Significant changes to the guidance include the following:

- Fully vaccinated individuals will no longer need to wear a mask indoors in public places where vaccination statuses of individuals are checked (masks will be required in areas where people are not asked about their vaccination status).
- Businesses, employers and faith institutions have the right to determine their own masking policies for fully vaccinated individuals.
- Masks are no longer required for people who are outdoors, though masking is still encouraged, especially in crowded places and for people who are unvaccinated.



Here, at the COG, nothing has changed. The same safety precautions are being taken as before. There are several workgroups that are meeting regularly to discuss returning to work, what positions, how often, and what need to be done to keep everyone safe.

If you want more information on how to get the vaccine, there are a variety of resources by visiting the [Benton](#), [Linn](#) or [Lincoln](#) County websites. You can also visit the [Oregon State website](#), [SamHealth](#), or the [official CDC](#) website for more resources, such as pharmacies where you can receive the vaccine or the closest vaccination site to you.

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TOGETHER

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds from the Department of the Treasury

The Department of the Treasury announced on May 12th the launch of the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, established by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, to provide \$350 billion in emergency funding for eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments. The press release can be found [here](#).

The Treasury is also releasing details on how these funds can be used to respond to acute pandemic response needs, fill revenue shortfalls among these governments, and support the communities and populations hit hardest by COVID-19. The [Interim Final Rule](#) and the [Fact Sheet](#) can provide more information about this opportunity.

These documents and more information can be found on the [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds website](#).

Safety Section

Senior Medicare Patrol: Scam Alert!

If you follow the news or spend time online, you have no doubt heard about Medicare scams. Luckily, knowing how to spot some of the most common scams can help you and other Medicare beneficiaries protect your information and the Medicare system. Some Medicare scams to be aware of are:

- Unsolicited phone calls requesting Medicare numbers and other personal information. Sometimes these scammers will offer to send you a new Medicare card.
- Being charged for non-existent home visits to give insulin injections or other home health services.
- Overbilling for medical services. This could show up in many ways, including misrepresenting how much time was spent with a patient or inflating the use of medical supplies.
- Repackaging expired drugs and selling them as fresh ones.
- Stealing medical patient identities to gain access to controlled drugs.
- Providing medically unnecessary services.
- Sending supplies, such as incontinence supplies, to the patient without consulting whether the patient needs the supplies.



These are just a few of the scams that can target Medicare beneficiaries. It is important to take steps to protect your personal information, such as keeping your Medicare card in a secure place, checking your Medicare statements regularly and reporting any suspected scams. If you are interested in learning more about your Medicare and how to better protect yourself from Medicare scams, give OCWCOG SHIBA a call at 541-812-0849 (Linn/Benton Counties) or 541-574-2684 (Lincoln County).

More info: www.smpresource.org

Program Updates

Community Economic Development

By Jenny Glass

Transportation

- Transportation staff held a virtual open house for the Albany Area MPO's Bicycle Pedestrian Plan.
- CED will receive funding for all of the transit grants we submitted as part of the FY2021-2023 STIF and Section 5304 Grant programs. The four projects amount to over \$550,000 in state and federal monies to improve transit across the three counties.
- The Corvallis Area MPO supported members in submitting member designated projects to Congressman DeFazio, and Representative Rayfield, for inclusion in upcoming funding allocations.
- Transportation staff presented to Albany City Council at a work session to inform them of the Albany Transit Implementation Strategy.

RideLine

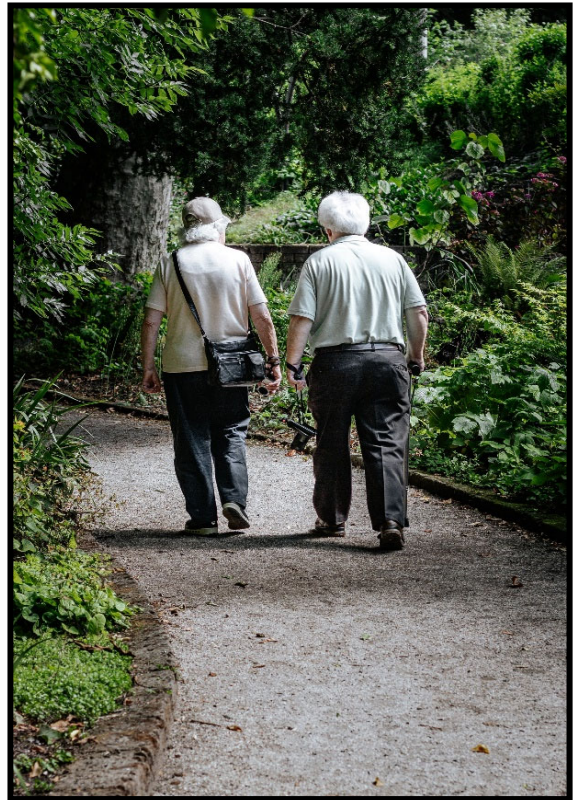
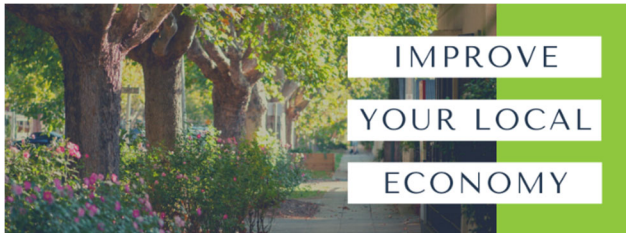
- Answering a call with a live voice within 30 seconds is one of the success metrics that Ride Line has struggled to meet. In 2020 they were at 64% and set a goal of reaching 75% in 2021. As of the end of March, they are already at 73%!
- Ride requests are picking back up as COVID restrictions lift and people feel safer taking transportation. March and April 2021 have been the busiest month since the pandemic started.

Community Development

- GIS expert Steve Lucker has announced his retirement this July. Although this leaves a huge gap on our team, we also look forward to reassessing our GIS and data/info systems services over the coming months.

Economic Development

- CEDS plan assisted Oregon RAIN in receiving Economic Development Administration funds.
- Ongoing work connecting with all 4 counties (Linn, Benton, Lincoln and Lane) in the Cascades West Economic Development District.



- Staff completed the Oregon Economic Resiliency Cohort.
- Writing project briefs to connect with Economic Development Administration funding:
 - Intermodal project in Millersburg
 - Albany Waterfront
 - Industrial lands in Millersburg
 - Opportunities in Corvallis, Monroe and with Siletz Tribe

Guidelines are available for the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Funds

Do you have a \$10,000 project you'd like funded? Oregon Cascade West can help! The guidelines for the Technical Assistance and Capacity Building for economic improvement funds are now available [HERE!](#)

Total funding available for the Competitive Resiliency & Recovery Funds program is \$100,000. Requests up to \$10,000 will be accepted. No cash match is required. Projects must be completed by May 30, 2022.

Application process is open from 8 a.m. PST on June 1 until 5 p.m. PST on June 15, 2021. Funding by July 15, 2021.

Eligible projects may include but are not limited to the following:

- Business and retention software
- Oregon Prospector data entry
- Shared work space
- Business registry
- Commercial kitchen
- Training workshops
- Community events
- Outdoor public spaces

If you have any questions, please email [Anne Whittington](#).

Senior, Disability & Community Services

By Randi Moore

Stand By Me (\$BM) Coaching Available to Staff of COG's Member Governments

As a reminder, \$BM is a financial empowerment program that started in Delaware more than ten years ago and has served more than 100,000 Delawareans. In 2019, with generous support provided by Benton County, OCWCOG worked to replicate the program in Oregon and improve the financial wellbeing of the residents of our three county region.

\$BM uses a coaching model to support clients in meeting four basic objectives – creating a budget, reducing debt, increasing savings, and improving credit scores. Coaches are embedded in community agencies and develop a trusted and ongoing relationship with their clients to help support them in meeting their individual and unique financial goals.



Stand By Me Coaches are already embedded and working with community agencies providing free one-on-one financial coaching for the people those agencies serve. They work to connect these clients who are struggling to meet their everyday needs to community resources, provide accountability for working on their goals, and over the long term improve their financial literacy.

\$BM coaching is free and confidential, and at this time all coaching sessions are being done telephonically or virtually.

Knowing the positive outcomes the \$BM program provides to the individuals who participate, their families, and the communities they live in, OCWCOG would like to expand the program's impact and grow our referral numbers. We believe that the city, county, port, and tribal employees that support you, our member governments, would be a group that would benefit greatly from working with the Stand By Me program.

Members of the \$BM Team would be happy to attend staff meetings and present information about the program to your staff or provide program information you can distribute to your workforce. Please feel free to reach out to me if this is something you are interested in.

I feel strongly that Stand By Me is an excellent program and hope you will encourage your workforce to embrace the opportunity to work toward the goal of being financially empowered!

Another Story about Older Americans Act Funds Doing Good Work in the Community

North End Senior Solutions (The NESS Club) is an Adult Day Service (ADS) Program in Lincoln County. Adult Day Services are a valuable resource in a community, providing caregivers of aging adults and persons living with disabilities with a much needed option for respite care services. We are lucky to have two ADS providers in our region, The NESS Club and Grace Center (Benton County).

Adult Day Service providers which were mandated to close operations, were hit hard financially by the COVID pandemic, but even more importantly suffered acute stress over not being able to support their participants and their families during the period they weren't operating.

"I've enjoyed so much helping others learn how to do online meetings, and I love seeing the joy in their faces as they see their friends. Even those who thought they couldn't do computers are learning more than they thought they could."

In November, OCWCOG asked for proposals for grant funding that would support projects that improve the safety, wellbeing, and independence of older adults and people with disabilities and their caregivers.

We were pleased to provide OAA funds to NESS to support their telehealth project, allowing participants that normally attend the NESS Club three times a week to meet virtually and stay connected. With the funds NESS purchased digital devices and internet or cell services, and provided personalized training for their members on going "remote".

Sheree Cronan, Executive Assistant

Agency Announcements & News

Board of Directors Meeting: Budget & Other Updates

The Board of Directors meeting is held every other month, on the third Thursday. The agenda was packed and much was accomplished.

- COG's Finance Director, Sue Forty, presented the current Consolidated Revenue and Expense Statement, for period ending March 31, 2021. The finance team takes the time to notate fluctuations in line items to make the budget easy to understand.
- Sue also presented Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Annual Work Program and Budget. The Board unanimously approved the operating budget of \$51M, the largest it's ever been.
- The Board approved the Executive Directors contract for an additional five years – Ryan Vogt is here to stay!
- There were a number of prior Reserves, adopted by Resolution and Policy that were revisited at the meeting. One Reserve had not been funded as intended; the rest were. There were two Reserves that have been funded, but not formally adopted by Resolution. The Board adopted a new policy by Resolution which incorporated the necessary revisions.
- May was a busy month for remembering and honoring various groups. The COG made proclamations for Older Americans and members of the Military. May proclamation paperwork has been signed!

Volunteer News

Brownsville needs Meals on Wheels Volunteers

Meals on Wheels of Brownsville NEEDS YOU to help make a difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents.

Volunteer today to support our community by delivering hot nutritious meals to people in need. Just a few hours a day, once or twice a week, can make a world of difference in someone's life!

Have questions? Contact Scott Harper at 541-924-8455, Sharper@ocwcog.org or fill out application online at <https://www.ocwcog.org/connect/volunteer/>



*Thank
you*

Other Announcements

OCWCOG is Hiring!

The agency is hiring for the following positions:

- [Case Managers \(Albany and Toledo\)](#)
Provides ongoing case management and financial eligibility to persons needing personal care assistance to promote quality of life, independence and care in the least restrictive setting. Works with MMIS payment and Consumer Assessment and Planning Systems (CAPS) and related forms and terminal screens.
- [Communications Specialist, Albany](#)
Plans and executes internal and external public information activities of the Council of Governments, including production of staff messages, newsletters, program brochures, audio-visual presentations, and news releases.
- [Meal Site Manager, Siletz-Toledo](#)
Manages the day-to-day operation of a meal site serving three days per week for Dining Room and Meals on Wheels. Coordinates all meal related activities including volunteer recruitments and training, community relations, record keeping and fund-raising.
- [Program Supervisor for SDS \(Albany and Toledo\)](#)
Responsible for the day-to-day operations of an assigned Senior and Disability Services work group. Interprets policy, implements procedures, directs staff, develops systems and monitors work activities. Coordinates services within Senior and Disability Services and other local health and social agencies.

For more information, or to apply, please visit: <http://www.ocwcog.org/careers>



Contact Information



Senior & Disability Services
(541) 967-8630

RideLine
(541) 924-8738

Economic Development
(541) 924-8465

General Administration
(541) 967-8720

ADRC
(800) 638-0510

