

Local

# Kentucky ranks among lowest in nation for senior care

✎ By Jacob Mulliken Messenger-Inquirer

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Kentucky ranks 50th in the percentage of preventable hospitalizations among Medicare recipients, AmeriCorps Program Director Brad Alley said at a Green River Area Development District (GRADD) Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday.

This, coupled with the state's low rankings in terms of home health care, hospice care, nursing home quality and poverty among seniors has made improving the lives senior citizens a top priority of GRADD and the Senior Connections AmeriCorps program, Alley said.

"The reason that we decided to begin Senior Connections is because Kentucky ranks 50th in the percentage of preventable hospitalizations among Medicare recipients," he said. "Which means we have a problem in Kentucky."

In his first few months on the job, Alley has taken the torch and run with continuing to aid senior citizens in Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union and Webster counties tackle the many issues that they face, he said.

"There are studies that show that certain hospitalizations can be avoided, and that is where we come in," he said.

"Those preventable types of visits are, as studies have shown, made up of those people that have no social contacts or interactions with others. They seem to experience the worst health."

To address this issue, the program seeks to provide increased services revolving around three key areas.

"We focus on preventable hospital stays," he said. "We tackle that through nutrition, socialization and some disaster preparedness."

As the only area development district that is an AmeriCorps operating site, GRADD is ideally positioned to address issues around senior care, and they have already made great strides.

"Through surveys that we put out to gauge our effectiveness in 2017 and 2018, we found that we have saved Medicaid \$6.27 million in hospital stays that were avoided because of our program," Alley said.

While they are slowly stemming the tide and empowering senior citizens to maintain quality of life and independence, it truly takes a village. Meaning, he said, that it takes civic-minded community members to serve in the program.

"There are a lot of positive reasons to serve, but people need to join for the right reasons," the newly appointed director said. "We take applications all year around if someone wants to apply. We will begin doing our community and advertising push starting in mid-June, a bit earlier than normal, but in my first year, I want to give myself plenty of time."

While they prefer applicants that are 55 or older, anyone from age 18 to 100 can apply.

AmeriCorps is a voluntary civil society program supported by the U.S. federal government, foundations, corporations and other donors engaging adults in public service work with a goal of helping others and meeting critical needs in the community, according to [nationalservice.gov](http://nationalservice.gov).

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