

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council Member Directory



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Patrick Harness

Patrick is Co-founder/President of the Champaign County Senior Task Force. He has also been involved with the Illinois Coalition on Mental Health and Aging, the Senior Care Network of Peoria County, and the Human Services Transportation Plan for Region 8 representing Champaign County.

Patrick would like to share that he is physically unable to parallel park and his favorite color is orange. He is passionate about home modification, believing that even with all the services available to seniors, if their home is not accessible then the services are ultimately of little use.

Patrick is a strong supporter of the Area Agencies and wants to contribute his expertise to their efforts and show his support by participating. He would have lunch with all four of his grandparents because he still misses them. In Patrick's "free" time he enjoys oil painting and cooking.

Patrick has represented Champaign County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2007. He is President of the Advisory Council since 2016.



Julie Bobitt

Julie lives in Forsyth, has children, and works at the University of Illinois in Urbana, Champaign. Julie loves aging policy and believes we all need to be advocates for older adults.

Julie has been working in the field of aging/gerontology for over 20 years and hopes she can contribute what she knows, and do, for the greater good of ECIAAA. She would like to expand her knowledge about what is happening throughout communities in east central Illinois.

While policy is a great thing, Julie adds that it happens at a higher level and trickles down from national to state to local levels.

Being on the ECIAAA Advisory Council keeps her connected to what is happening on the ground – which is where policy plays out. She stresses that programs happening at the ground level should be informing policy as equally as policy directs programming.

Julie would have lunch with her mother because she has so many questions about life on which she would love to have her perspective. In her limited spare time, Julie enjoys reading, exercising (particularly walking and biking), and spending time watching her children play sports in high school and on traveling teams.

Julie has represented Champaign County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2009.



Harley Bennet

Harley is a retired accountant that has represented Clark County on the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging Corporate Board since 2013. He is involved in rural public transportation and is a liaison for the ECIAAA Corporate Board.

Harley is passionate about health care and its costs. Harley would have lunch with U.S. unknown soldiers. He wants to know what branch of service they were in and who their family were.

Harley enjoys knife and coin collecting.

Harley has represented Clark County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2023.



Dawn Sandone

Dawn has traveled the world from birth having grown up in a military family. Her father was a decorated pilot in WWI, having received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism in combat. Having graduated top of my class in 1995 from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida with a BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) and Minor in Business Law, over the last 30 years Dawn acquired professional expertise in the areas of business law, marketing,

communications, fundraising and public relations. She resides in Champaign in the quaint Clark Park neighborhood.

Dawn is passionate about the issue of Baby Boomers aging into Medicare at a rate of 10,000 per day! As a result, the demands on health care for this aging population (of which I am one of them) will grow exponentially in the coming years. As a licensed Medicare specialist, there is no greater time for her to do her part in educating the 55+ population on the importance of securing adequate health insurance as they approach retirement, while supporting the many social service agencies, such as ECIAAA, that are dedicated to the wellbeing of seniors.

In her Health Alliance Community Outreach role, she has the honor to meet regularly with various social service agencies throughout central Illinois that are committed to serving the needs of seniors. This “boots on the ground” approach allows her to share critical information with the members of the ECIAAA Advisory Council that will enhance the council’s ability to fulfill its mission effectively.

Dawn would have lunch with her mother, whom she lost when she was twenty-six and her mother was 64 years old. She has lived most of my life without her mom. Given the chance, she would like to apologize to her for the mistakes she has made since she passed away and she would seek her great wisdom in ensuring she lives a life from this point forward as noble as she did.

In her personal time Dawn is honored to care for an elderly neighbor and dear friend that lives alone and is battling cancer. Her greatest personal joy comes

from the love of her two dogs -- Savannah & Kennedy, her cat -- Buddy, and her great nieces and great nephews.

Dawn has represented DeWitt County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since March 2023.

Judith Ondercho



Judith is a retired nursing home administrator from Paxton, Illinois. She has been involved with the Alzheimer's Association, the Paxton Women's Club, and the American Cancer Society.

Judith is the 4th of four sisters which she shares has been the best of relationships and something she would never give up.

She has a passion for making a person's last years a living experience. After a lifetime of fairly close dealings with people Judith

remains interested in people care and feels a need to collect ideas and push that idea where its best/most needed.

Judith would have lunch with her dear friend Mary Thompson, the columnist Tim Russert and Charlie Rose. In her spare time, she enjoys being with family, friends and God. She loves music, theatre, movies, reading, and corresponding via pen and paper.

Judith has represented Ford County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2012.

Peggy Busey

Patty Haberkorn



Patty is the director of Futures Unlimited in Pontiac, serving adults with disabilities in Livingston County. Her background is in nursing, which is how she started at Futures.

Patty is passionate about Giving seniors the ability to age as gracefully as possible and to have choices about how they want to live out their lives. Having the option to remain in their homes for as long as possible is an important issue, as is the cost of care and meds.

She serves on Advisory Council because she was asked by Karen Donovan to take Karen's place on the council. Additionally, her mother and in-laws are both aging and have issues, so this is a topic that she is dealing with firsthand and realizes how important it is. She hopes to continue learning about senior issues and would like to have a role in improving the lives of seniors in our communities.

Patty would have lunch with her father who has passed not only because she misses him but also to ask him all the family history questions that she didn't think to ask when he was alive. Her mother suffers from dementia, so she is unable to ask her. She really misses the mealtime conversations her parents used to have with her and would love to have one more of those with both of them.

She and her husband reside in Livingston County on the family farm. They have children and grandchildren whom they love to spend time with. Spending time with the grandkids is number one on the priority list! She enjoys yard work, walks, and reading. Patty and her husband enjoy spending time with family and friends when we have a little extra time, also.

Patty has represented Livingston County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2018.

Julie Walker

Julie has worked in the senior network and public health for 20+ years. She is currently Executive Director of Community Home Environmental Learning Project, Inc (CHELP).

An aging issue Julie is passionate about is self-determination and aging in place. She wants to have a positive effect on policy making for older adults, their families, and caregivers that has a focus on common sense and practical solutions.

She would have lunch with her father because he was her mentor and taught her compassion, empathy, and bravery. Julie appreciates hanging out with her family in her “free” time (especially her grandchildren). She enjoys walking and hiking or playing pool!

Julie has represented Macon County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since May 2019.

Emily Dobson



Emily is a soccer, basketball, baseball, music, and drama Grandma. She has worked with people with disabilities of all ages for the past eighteen years. Emily is very involved in rural public transportation, both at local and regional levels.

Emily is passionate about health and wellness for all ages and allowing people to live as independently as possible. She would like to see the council advance the causes of ageing in place and senior fitness.

Emily would have lunch with her father. She really misses him and often could use his advice and counsel. She belongs to a performing singing group, enjoys traveling to the beach and mountains, and working to organize community events including 5K races.

Emily has represented Piatt County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2016.

Cheri Burcham



Cheri lives in Sullivan, IL but her job as a Family Life Educator with the University of Illinois Extension has her covering the counties of Shelby, Moultrie, Douglas, Coles and Cumberland. She has a degree in Gerontology and has always worked with older adults and their families in some capacity. Cheri has been married for almost 30 years and has a son attending Aurora University.

Cheri has a special interest in the area of caregiving. Although she has never been one herself, she has worked with many caregivers and realize the many challenges they have. In Extension, she has assisted in writing a caregiving curriculum and facilitate sessions with caregivers that address many issues like difficult emotions, changing relationships, self-care and finding senior services. She is also interested in healthy aging and the ways to age “successfully” - by caring for oneself physically and mentally. She researches and teaches many classes on improving overall well-being for all ages.

Cheri has always had respect for ECIAAA and wanted to be a part of this agency in some way. She feels she can gain more insight into the programs offered which will help her in her work by being able to share with her older audiences. She also hopes to be able to bring the needs she sees out in the field to ECIAAA for consideration in their programming and services.

Cheri would love to have lunch or just a chat with God because she has so many questions she would love answers too!

Cheri loves to read and to be outside enjoying nature. Fun Fact: She has a hobby of raising Monarch butterflies from spring to fall and educating others on their dire situation and how we can all help them avoid becoming endangered. She also practices yoga and mindfulness meditation and watches her son participate in track meets (hopefully they will have some this year! [2020]) She also loves to travel – especially to tropical beach locations!

Cheri has represented Shelby County on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since August 2020.

Nicole Dowling



Nicole is the Coordinator for Faith in Action at OSF Healthcare Heart of Mary Medical Center in Champaign. She previously worked with CRIS Healthy-Aging Centers in Danville and Champaign. She was involved with the Case Coordination Unit and the Bridge Transition Program with CRIS, Faith in Action for Vermilion County, Vermilion Area Partnership for UNMET Needs, and the Halo Project.

Nicole is a caregiver for her grandmother whom still lives independently in her own home.

Nicole is passionate about Dementia and Alzheimer's. Her uncle was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and she's seen the impact it's had on her aunt and cousins. She'd like to be a voice for seniors in Vermilion County and enjoys meeting and working with others who are passionate about seniors and those in need.

Nicole would have lunch with Faith Hill because she loves her music and seems like a strong, genuine woman who balances raising a family along with a successful career. In her spare time Nicole watches her kids' sports activities. She also spends time fishing, swimming and camping near Kickapoo.

Nicole has served on the ECIAAA Advisory Council since 2015-2019 representing Champaign and Vermilion Counties. She currently represents Vermilion County.