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Contact: Ellen Phipps, Executive Director  
ephipps@agingtogether.org  
540-829-6405  
PO Box 367  
Culpeper, VA 22701

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

### **Aging Together Expands Staffing Through Dynamic Transportation Partnership**

Aging Together is joined with the Regional Commission, the Community Services Board, and other key community programs and stakeholders in a new mobility management model called the **Regional Transportation Collaborative (RTC)**.

During 2021 partners in the Collaborative worked to address transportation needs of aging adults and those with disabilities, collect comprehensive data, strategically plan mobility projects, and source diverse funding. These efforts have enabled Aging Together to expand and dedicate staffing specifically to support transportation goals identified through the RTC and ultimately improve mobility for older adults.

In January 2022, Aging Together welcomed Julie Johnston for the newly created part-time Project and Outreach Assistant. Julie is from Culpeper and is already familiar with the region and some of the partner organizations. She will use her graphic design background to build specialized outreach and marketing support to the various RTC partners, helping spread the word to the target population about the RTC and its services.

Additionally in February this year Aging Together welcomed Sarah Gillespie, part-time Volunteer Driver Recruiter. Sarah is familiar with recruitment and supporting organized groups through her past corporate experience. Her outreach role will help expand the audience of Aging Together and the RTC at community events and groups throughout the region, and especially to recruit volunteer drivers for the various RTC partners. The RTC relies heavily on volunteer drivers to provide transportation. In Fiscal Year 2021, the equivalent charitable donation from volunteer driver hours and miles driven contributed over \$350K and provided rides to over one thousand individuals throughout the five-county region.

The RTC model was created in August 2020 to mitigate losses and limitations from state funding and policies. Comprehensive data collection highlighted unique needs that fall through gaps in broader systems and supported acquisition of alternative funding sources to assist with growing transportation deficits.

“The newly formed RTC represents an important initiative that addresses and responds to community voices, something Aging Together has always considered paramount to improved

conditions at a more local level”, says Ellen Phipps, Aging Together’s Executive Director. *Community Conversations*, a project completed in 2019 around the entire region, identified transportation as both a strength and a challenge in each of our five counties, especially affecting the older adult population. “So, this innovative model for transportation collaboration epitomizes expanded programs in our region that positively impact needs of older adults and people with disabilities, specifically reacting to community feedback. Ultimately, that’s the goal!”, says Phipps. Having staff on board who target increased transportation outcomes enhances the opportunity for our region to offer livable communities for everyone.

*The mission of Aging Together is, through partnerships, to connect people to communities and resources to improve quality of life as we age. Aging Together serves the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, Madison and Rappahannock.*

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**PHOTOS FOLLOW**



**Julie Johnston**



**Sarah Gillespie**

