GRAY MATTERS: 'Who are Humboldt's 'older adults'?'

Carol Harrison/For the Times-Standard
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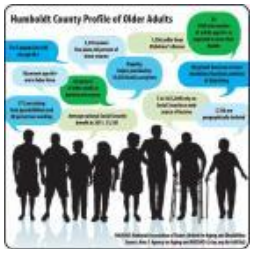

Humboldt County's population of older adults is growing, and so are its needs.

”Our community isn't ready to handle the demands of an aging population,” said Area 1 Agency on Aging Executive Director Maggie Kraft. “Decreased funding for social services means we aren't keeping up with demand, and ongoing challenges in transportation, caregiving, access to medical care and housing aren't going away.”

Demand may grow even faster after last week's announcement that Estately, a national real estate website, named Eureka one of the “13 Best Cities for Swingin' Seniors.” (For more information about this announcement, see “Eureka named top city for seniors,” Times-Standard, Feb. 11, Page A1. The story is available online at http://times-standard.com.)

”That's great news for active older adults on the younger side, but what about the rest of the seniors in our community -- the ones who have been our neighbors for years?” Kraft said.

Kraft heads the local nonprofit mandated by the Older Americans Act to work for the benefit of people with disabilities or age 60 and older. A1AA disperses and manages federal and state funds given to various contractors to help provide senior services such as home-delivered meals, congregate meals and legal services.

It also develops a four-year area plan and provides caregiver support and training, resource referral, nutrition services and free, unbiased health insurance counseling and advocacy.

A1AA also coordinates the Volunteer Center of the Redwoods and RSVP, home of the volunteer driver program, and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, where one full-time employee and multiple volunteers advocate for those who live in skilled nursing and residential care facilities.

”Being local and nonprofit means we do more with less than a government agency, and it means we have greater flexibility to respond to emerging needs,” Kraft said. “But our community has to understand that the aging services that exist now are unable to meet demand.”

For more information, call 442-3763 or see www.a1aa.org.