

# BLS—Area Agency on Aging—Making a difference for Seniors

By Shelly Ballard, BLS President

Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Inc. is a funded government agency. However, like everyone else they have experienced budget cuts. The government funds they receive are already allocated. What they need often are discretionary funds, in other words, **CASH**. This is where BLS can help. BLS is affiliated with the Area Agency on Aging but does not operate under its restrictions. BLS is an all volunteer organization, we can spend our time doing what we do best - making lives better for seniors. We can do this by the actions we all take every day. We can also do this by donating funds to organizations like the Area Agency on Aging and many others in our area that help seniors.

BLS does many things to raise funds: BLS donates a portion of the membership fee collected each year to different organizations. In August 2008 BLS held an event called "A Night to Remember" to celebrate BLS's 20th Anniversary. Many BLS members sponsored and or attended the event. Each quarter BLS holds a "Consortium"; an event where many of our members attend, usually from 100-130 people. At each event a small donation is requested at the door from attendees. BLS often collects paper products at consortiums to donate to Suncoast Center. BLS also has a BLS Scholarship fund and accepts donations for this fund from companies and individuals.

**Better Living for Seniors has donated to the following organizations and projects in the past 2 years:**

The **Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Inc.** - \$5.00 from each membership fee (approximately \$1250 a year) plus \$6,500 from Night to Remember December 2008.

**The Fall Prevention Program** through the Area Agency on Aging - \$750.

**Suncoast Center** - \$2.50 from each BLS membership fee, (approx \$600 a year) plus paper products + \$750 raised from a Marketing conference. Suncoast Center provides services for adults, seniors and children. Including Adult Outpatient services, Adult Medical services for provision of medications, day treatment services, homeless services, and emergency services and substance abuse intervention programs.

**VOCA** - \$2.50 from each BLS membership fee each year. VOCA is the Victims of Crime Act program. (approx \$600 a year) + \$750 raised from a Marketing Conference.

**BLS Scholarship fund - \$1,500.** This scholarship is awarded to students focusing on senior services such as

nursing.

**Elves for Elders project** - \$2,000 plus gifts. Starting in 2008 BLS organizes the Elves for Elders project, this project provides gifts at the holidays for Wards of the State who have no family or access to funds for necessities such as clothing or toiletries. This is done by placing "Angel" Trees in local retailers and asking the public to help purchase gifts for these needy individuals. This is a big project and takes lots of organization and work.

**Aging Solutions** - \$500. Office of The Public Guardian. They provide guardian services to wards of the state. As funds allow Aging Solutions purchases dental, hearing & vision services for wards of the state. They have a waiting list of wards who need public guardians and dental, hearing & vision services. [www.aging-solutions.org](http://www.aging-solutions.org).

**Alzheimer's Association.** BLS members are strong participants in the yearly Alzheimer's walk which raises funds for Alzheimer's treatment and research. [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

**H.O.N.O.R. (Helping our needy Ones Respectfully)** \$500. Free home maintenance & minor repairs for those 60 & above. They need funds to buy supplies to repair roofs, air conditioners, hot water heaters and plumbing supplies. [www.honorinc.org](http://www.honorinc.org).

**Lighthouse of Pinellas** - \$500 Provides services to the visually impaired. [www.lighthouseofpinellas.org](http://www.lighthouseofpinellas.org).

**Project Lifesaver** - \$500. Provides tracking device wrist bands for those who may wander. [www.pcsoweb.com](http://www.pcsoweb.com).

**PARC Senior Center** - \$1,000 to help fund their Senior Activities program for developmentally disabled seniors. [www.parc-fl.org](http://www.parc-fl.org).

**Pinellas Hope Senior Respite Program-** \$1,000. This program provides recuperative care to homeless persons who are too medically frail to return to the streets but do not require further hospitalization or skilled nursing care. Contact Joy McRae-Fox, Pinellas Hope Respite Coordinator, 727-439-0228.

**Much thanks goes to the Area Agency on Aging for continuing to support BLS by providing administrative services, accounting services and much, much more that cannot be valued with a dollar.**

**Thanks to our members for giving generously of themselves to BLS/AAA and to our seniors everyday. To say I am proud to be a part of this organization would be a massive understatement.**