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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

HHS Director Marilyn Mann, (760) 878-0120

Public Relations Liaison Darcy Ellis, (760) 878-0292

UPGRADES PLANNED FOR INYO SENIOR CENTERS

INDEPENDENCE – Inyo County will soon be embarking on a multi-year effort to complete more than \$400,000 worth of infrastructure improvements and equipment upgrades at its Bishop, Lone Pine, and Tecopa senior centers.

Funding for the projects is provided by the Home and Community Based Services Nutrition Infrastructure Grant Program and is intended to prioritize purchasing, upgrading, or refurbishing infrastructure to produce and distribute congregate or home-delivered meals. The grants come at a critical time when counties across the nation are working to ensure service delivery can keep up with the growing aging population.

“Given the fact that by 2030 people over the age of 60 will outnumber people under 18 for the first time in our history, anything we can do to support our aging population and ensure our infrastructure is strong to be able to meet needs is important,” said Inyo County Health and Human Services Director Marilyn Mann.

Mann announced last week that the Eastern Sierra Area Agency on Aging, a program of HHS, has been allocated \$526,136 for projects at senior center facilities in both Inyo and Mono counties; \$420,136 will be spent in Inyo County and \$106,000 in Mono. The grant agreement expires December 31, 2024.

Several projects of varying scale were identified for the senior centers in Bishop, Lone Pine, and Tecopa, which were subsequently reviewed by the ESAAA Advisory Council and approved by the State Department of Aging:

Tecopa Senior Center, 405 Hot Springs, Rd., Tecopa – Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Remodeling kitchen
- Purchasing and installing commercial gas range
- Installing heated shelf warmers
- Replacing heavy duty insulated food delivery bags
- Purchasing a back-up generator

Lone Pine Senior Center, 138 Jackson St., Lone Pine – Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

- Replacing kitchen flooring
- Painting kitchen
- Replacing commercial oven
- Installing heated shelf warmers

Replacing heavy duty insulated food delivery bags
Installing electric doors
Upgrading walk-in freezer/refrigerator
Replacing small appliances

Bishop Senior Center, 682 Spruce St., Bishop – Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Replacing kitchen flooring
Replacing congregate area flooring
Painting kitchen
Replacing commercial oven
Installing walk-in freezer
Installing heated shelf warmers
Replacing heavy duty insulated food delivery bags
Installing electric doors
Replacing small appliances

Mann noted that staff is working with Inyo County Public Works on the timing and priority of the work over the course of the grant agreement, which expires December 31, 2024.

In Inyo County, where the older population already outnumbered the 18-and-below set and senior meal numbers are starting to surpass pre-COVID levels, the infrastructure upgrades are greatly appreciated.

According to the ESAAA budget for the current fiscal year, the agency provided 35,734 congregate or home-delivered meals during the first three quarters of FY 21-22. About 78 percent of those meals – 27,873 – were served in Inyo County. Mann told the Board of Supervisors last week that the numbers of seniors being served congregate meals is increasing in Lone Pine and Bishop, with the latter senior center averaging about 80 people a day. Mann called this a “significant” increase from when the County took over the senior programs in 2009.

HHS is hoping to increase participation in Independence, where attendance has yet to recover from the pandemic and a shift of locations. Mann urged residents age 60 and over to call ESAAA to express an interest in attending. Senior meals are offered at 155 E. Market St. on Fridays from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., upon request.

“I’m looking forward to the planned improvements to the senior centers and grateful to the HHS staff who worked to get the grant funding. The planned improvements will not only be a long-term benefit to our local senior population, they will also be a benefit to County staff working at the community centers,” said Supervisor Matt Kingsley, whose district includes Independence, Lone Pine, and Tecopa. “These upgrades will also help Inyo County in its efforts to continue meeting the growing needs of our older population in the coming years.”

The American Association of Retired Persons predicts that by 2030, the number of adults over the age of 65 living in the U.S. will for the first time in the nation’s history outnumber those under the age of 18.

According to AARP, by 2035 there will be estimated 78 million Americans 65 years and older compared to 76.4 million under the age of 18.

The 2020 Census lists Inyo County's population at 19,016, with 24.1 percent over the age of 65 and 20.9 under the age of 18.

For more information about the senior programs, call (760) 873-6364.