FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indiana, Arizona Partner in Aging Efforts
Representatives Visit Region to Share Lessons

PHOENIX (January 15, 2015)—Sharing lessons learned and innovative tactics to help rural communities become more age- and ability-friendly is the goal of a partnership among agencies in Arizona and Indiana. It also is the impetus for a site visit by Indiana representatives in our region this week.

The Rural Age-Friendly Collaborative is a partnership among the Arizona Age-Friendly Network (administered by the Maricopa Association of Governments) and the Indiana Philanthropy Alliance and Indiana University Public Policy Institute. The organizations have been recognized for their innovative age-friendly efforts and were provided support from Grantmakers in Aging and the Pfizer Foundation.

Ten Indiana representatives, including the mayor of Huntington, will spend two days in the Valley meeting with elected officials and representatives from the Arizona Age-Friendly Network, which includes the Northwest Valley and eight Arizona communities: Bullhead City, Maricopa (city of), Phoenix, Quartzsite, Scottsdale, Surprise, Tempe, and Wickenburg. The goal of the network is to explore ways to improve connections among people of all generations. An agenda for the site visit is attached.

“We are excited to host this inaugural meeting of the Rural Age-Friendly Collaborative to help improve the lives of people of all ages in our region,” said Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Chair Michael LeVault, mayor of Youngtown. “The value gained by working together is critical. I continue to be impressed with the ability of leaders to find not just common ground, but higher ground. The outcomes and dialogue from this visit will give our cities and towns more tools for becoming stronger in building age-friendly communities.”

Maricopa Mayor Christian Price is among those supporting the pilot efforts. “The city of Maricopa is very committed to building age-friendly communities. Our city council approved a resolution emphasizing the importance of this activity, and we have hired an encore Fellow, Reverend Arnold Jackson, to coordinate these efforts. Reverend Jackson is a great example of how we can harness the talents of ‘encore workers’ to strengthen our communities.”

Mayor Brooks Fetters of Huntington, Indiana says rural communities face different advantages and disadvantages than urban or suburban areas. “For example, rural communities may be more collaborative due to limited resources. Large geographic distances may also isolate people, limit the accessibility of services, and challenge coordination efforts by making meeting together in person difficult,” he said.

Bedford Mayor Shawna Girgis, whose staff is participating in the site visit, agreed. “The city of Bedford has been actively engaged in creating an age friendly community that provides opportunities for residents to spend their entire lives in our community,” said Mayor Girgis. “This collaborative will identify and highlight the most promising practices and build capacity through a two state collaboration leveraging the best talents within each state.”

The site visit will include stops in Phoenix, Surprise, and Wickenburg.

# # #