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NEWS RELEASE

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EXPERT PRESENTS HOARDING BEHAVIOR PROGRAMS

LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS—Aging Care Connections, La Grange, sponsored two presentations by nationally-recognized expert on hoarding behavior, Christiana Bratiotis, PhD, LCSW, postdoctoral fellow and adjunct professor of Clinical Practice, adjunct lecturer in Social Welfare Policy, Mental Health Policy and Clinical Practice, Boston University, on Thursday, July 14.

The first program, **Interventions for Hoarding: A Housing, Service, Clinical and Enforcement Team Approach to Hoarding**, was tailored to information for clinicians and professionals who are typically first responders to reports of hoarding. Dr. Bratiotis defined hoarding as “the acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value.” The situation precludes the use of living spaces for the purposes they were designed and causes significant distress or impairment in functioning.

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The second program, **Hoarding Behavior: Intervention**, held later the same day, was a unique opportunity for family members or friends of persons with hoarding behavior to discuss their concerns and learn more about how to help.

About 5% of the US population exhibits hoarding behavior which usually begins around the age of 13. Individuals who are depressed, have social phobia, or anxiety disorder, are often likely to exhibit hoarding behavior. They may also have personality traits such as perfectionism, excessive focus on details and difficulty with emotions, trusting others and taking another's perspective. Most individuals begin receiving treatment around the age of 50.

There are many social and economic results for those who exhibit hoarding behavior. Research has demonstrated that hoarders miss an average of seven work days in a month; they have difficulty paying bills; they are more likely to have mental or physical problems; they have been threatened with eviction and may have had a child or elder removed from their home.

In addition, there are many safety concerns for those who hoard, such as fire hazard, sanitation, infestation, blocked access and crush hazard. Dealing with hoarders requires an integrated network of professionals from a variety of disciplines such as mental health, housing, fire, police, animal control, medical, public health and governmental officials.

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Dr. Bratiotis has developed a Hoarding Task Force Model to deal with this often time consuming, expensive and difficult disorder. Utilizing this approach increases the skills or expertise required to deal with the problem and reduces the resources required when just one agency is involved.

Because inappropriate intervention will result in the re-accumulation of clutter, it is necessary to provide for a supportive reduction of clutter through behavioral coaching and mental health treatment such as specialized cognitive behavioral therapy. The goals are to keep people safe in their homes, minimize the acquisition of clutter, maintain organization and provide supportive monitoring for safety maintenance in a functional home. It is extremely important that the individual's beliefs about the meaning of possessions be changed and improved organizing habits be learned to achieve success.

Dr. Bratiotis is an author of the recently-released *The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals* published by Oxford University Press. It is the first publication to focus on hoarding and human service systems that encounter this frustrating social problem and includes recommendations for efficient use of fiscal and personnel resources in hoarding cases presenting a Hoarding Task Force Intervention Model useful to a wide range of service providers.

Dr. Bratiotis' presentations were part of Aging Care Connections' 40th Anniversary Signature Lecture Series sponsored by Burcor Properties, First National Bank of La Grange and Adventist La Grange Memorial Hospital partnering with the First Congregational Church of Western Springs.

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Celebrating its 40th Anniversary, Aging Care Connections is a non-profit organization which is the connection to the most comprehensive, expert information, programs and services enabling older adults to remain independent and their families to make the best, most informed decisions regarding needed care in their lives. Serving 22 communities in Lyons, Riverside and south Proviso Townships and an additional ten communities in Leyden and Norwood Park Townships for elder abuse investigation, Aging Care Connections' programs and services are made possible by community support and donations, and, in part, by the Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA), AgeOptions, Community Memorial Foundation and local United Ways. To learn more, visit www.agingcareconnections.org.