

# SENIOR CONNECTION

Information for Seniors & Caregivers

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## "Dr. Dwyer Goes to Washington"

Reflections on the 2005 White House Conference on Aging



As I write this article, I have been asked to participate in an event at Worcester State College as a follow up to the White House Conference on Aging held last fall. The timing is, for me, serendipitous, since it is an opportunity to collect my thoughts, put things into perspective, and prepare to articulate just a few of the feelings that have stayed with me since returning from Washington in mid-December.

Many things can be said about the White House Conference on Aging in 2005. It can rightly be characterized as having been "canned," since the proposals were prepared in advance by a small group of insiders. It might also be said to have been a well-orchestrated, administration-driven agenda, with some highly visible members of the President's cabinet touting the "party line" on Medicare Part D, Social Security, and the like. And, as was reported, it was the first White House Conference on Aging to take place without a visit from the Chief Executive, his wife, or the Vice-President.

My experience would have to say

that, yes, all of the above are either true or, at least, have a sense of truth about them. Yet, in returning from the Conference, I also took away some very valuable concepts that need to be shared.

In each of the sessions that I attended, there were people from all walks of life. There were seniors, of course, but also providers, politicians, computer techs, marketing specialists, an actor, financial planners and a host of others. And the ONE THING that brought us all together was an interest in aging. Attendees may have worked directly with an aging population, or perhaps were interested in the future of aging and how it will affect our world. Some delegates were there to push an agenda, some to simply better understand the changing world.

All of the delegates that I had the pleasure of sitting with and conversing on the topic at hand were people who really wanted to help, to be of service, to make sure that aging in America was positive for all of us who are growing older by the day. People from Maine to New Mexico, Florida to the Pacific Northwest, from New England, the mid-Atlantic states, the Bible Belt or the Rockies, all gathered to say that people who age, whether baby boomers or the older old, are important and vital. We all want to

see programs and services grow and expand, both to meet the evolving needs but also to meet the expanding population.

For all of the issues that might be seen as negatives, the strength and hope of the delegates must also be seen as the more important piece. Not one of the strategies discussed will ever be implemented without the people who, like so many of the gathered delegates, are willing to make the strategies happen on a daily basis. And, even beyond government funding, with or without Congressional action, many of the dreams that were dreamed over those few days in December of 2005 can, and will become reality because of the strength of seniors, families, caregivers, providers and the others who gave their time,

energy and spirit.

Some of this will be driven by private enterprise. No doubt, the coming of the boomers into the aging population is viewed as a "boon" to both larger corporations and cottage industries. Yet again, it will be the folks on the "front line" of senior care that will become the bridge between service and elder. Whether professional or family caregiver, the person in the home and on the phone will be the one to make progress happen.

Again, my thanks go to Congressman Richard Neal for granting to me this great opportunity. And, my thanks to all caregivers and service providers for the work you do everyday of your lives.



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## **ELECTIONS HELD AT ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

The Board of Directors of Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging are pleased to announce the results of elections recently held at the Agency's Annual Business Meeting.

Returning for their third, three-year terms are Winifred "Una" Rice of Uxbridge and Millie Marion of Templeton.

Una was also re-elected as President of the CMAA Board. Joining her on the Executive Committee are returning members Vice-President Anthony Feroci, Esq., of Leominster, Treasurer Eugene O'Rourke of Uxbridge and Secretary Mary Rice of Uxbridge.

Cynthia Dziurgot, Esq., of Clinton, a former President of the Board, retired after her second three-year term. In representing the Nominating Committee, Millie Marion asked for a motion to send a letter to Ms. Dziurgot thanking her for the years of service she offered to the Agency. The motion was unanimously approved.

Many thanks to ALL the members of the CMAA Board of Directors, and for the hard work they do in support of YOUR Area Agency on Aging.

# Older Americans Month

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH 2006



CHOICES FOR INDEPENDENCE

It's time again to celebrate Older Americans Month in May of 2006. The theme chosen for this is "Choices for Independence."

The concept of independence, and the opportunity to make choices for that independence, is what the vast majority of seniors, and boomers as well, would want for our years ahead.

This theme is also important as we look to what may be the best way to offer services for seniors going forward, giving us all appropriate and equal choice opportunities as we age.

Across the State, area agencies on aging and aging services access points have been trying for several years to move the Commonwealth into offering more and varied choices in the arena of community based care. Home care services, meals on wheels, personal care aides, transportation, shopping, and so many other of our daily activities become ever more important as our population grows older.

One way you can help is by joining in the Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging Annual Appeal. Letters will be sent to many of you, and others in our community, asking for your help to defray the cost of coordinating services to fill the needs of elders with programs like legal assistance, meals, transportation and information and referral for the many who only need help in finding a service. CMAA has, for over 30 years, been working to better understand the needs of seniors, and help to fill the cracks in services that help them on a daily basis.

With your help, we can continue to move forward to strengthen the community based service system, established under the Older Americans Act, and thus enhance our "Choices for Independence" right in our own back yard.



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## **The End of Open Enrollment in Medicare Part D and Prescription Advantage is Coming Soon!**

**D**o you still have questions about Medicare Part D? Do you want to find out more about Prescription Advantage? The end of Open Enrollment for both is coming up soon.

**P**rescription Advantage, the State sponsor prescription drug program, has announced there will be an Open Enrollment for Medicare Beneficiaries age 65 and over from March 15 - April 28, 2006. Prescription Advantage is a secondary payer to Medicare Part D and their assistance is based on a sliding scale according to income. The Medicare Part D enrollment will continue until May 15, 2006.

**C**entral Massachusetts Agency on Aging has SHINE Counselors in our office every Monday and Friday afternoons between 1 and 3 PM. Call (508) 852-5539/(800) 244-3032 to set up an appointment, or for the number of your local Senior Center.

**M**eet us on line every 2nd Tuesday of the month to “chat” with a SHINE Counselor at [www.SeniorConnection.org](http://www.SeniorConnection.org), Connection for Caregivers. Bring your questions about Medicare, MassHealth and other health insurance options affecting Medicare beneficiaries both seniors and younger disabled adults, and receive unbiased and up-to-date information.