

SENIOR CONNECTION

Information for Seniors & Caregivers

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"Dr. Dwyer Goes to Washington"

In our last newsletter, you may have seen that Congressman Richard Neal (D - Springfield) has appointed me as his delegate to the White House Conference on Aging. I cannot tell you how humbled I am by this, and how exciting it is to know that I will be a part of this event that only takes place once every 10 years.

The expectation is that the results of this conference will help form aging policy over the next decade or more. A major piece of the conference will examine what might happen to the "baby-boomers," folks of my generation that are so quickly facing the Third Age of our lives. How can we plan for this? What will the workplace look like for us at that time? How will we be able to continue to serve our communities? Will our health hold up? And what place will technology and innovation hold in the marketplace?

These are some of the many questions that delegates from across the nation will tackle starting December 11, 2005.

From where I sit, it looks like one huge agenda to tackle, and I'm not

sure what the answers will be. Yet, there will be hundreds of us from across the country trying to determine a course of action, at least the beginning of a journey into the future for the coming generation of seniors.



Yet, it is my hope that the discussions will not ignore the current seniors, the "greatest generation." The needs of our current Older Americans cannot be glossed over. Fears and anxiety over

prescription drugs, social security, and now more than ever, the simple cost of running a household, cannot be ignored. So many of today's elders will still be with us in 10 years that their issues must be discussed. Aging policy that propels us to the year 2015 is wonderful. But we cannot overlook the year 2006 and what that may bring for the seniors we serve each day.

So, wish me luck and safe travel. And, you can expect a full report in the next newsletter.

Robert Dwyer is the Executive Director of Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging.

Confused about Medicare Part D Prescription Coverage?

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER!

We at CMAA know that the changes you are facing in Medicare are confusing. For many of us, this confusion is also causing some fear. Here are some tips to help get you through:



1) Keep all the material sent to you by Social Security, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), any health plan to which you may belong, your former employer if you are on a retiree plan, or the Veterans' Affairs Department.

2) Read this material carefully. Ask someone to read it with you if you think you are not fully understanding the text. If you need a translation, be sure to get it!

3) Don't be afraid to call SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders) and ask for help and clarification.

4) If you belong to a health plan from your former employer, call the benefits administrator with any questions you may have.

5) If you belong to a "Medicare Advantage" health plan (e.g., Fallon Senior Plan, Blue Care 65, Medex Gold or Bronze, etc.)

be sure to ask their customer service for answers that you understand.

6) If you are a member of MassHealth, know that you will receive special information from that office. Be sure that you understand this information. Call SHINE for special assistance!

7) If you currently belong to the State's pharmacy plan, Prescription Advantage (PA), know that this program is also changing. The planned changes are there to help YOU pay for medications and co-payments related to Medicare Part D. If you have PA, but do not have Medicare, you will receive special instructions.

8) If you have access to the Internet, be sure to check out www.SeniorConnection.org, for more information.



**Late Breaking News!
Elder Care 2006
May 10, 2006
Holiday Inn
Lincoln St., Worcester MA
Save The Date!**

THE CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS AGENCY ON AGING AWARDS GRANTS

Effective October 1, 2005, 26 grants were awarded in the amount of \$1,759,671 to 15 non-profit organizations serving elders throughout Central Massachusetts.

These federal grants, authorized under the Older Americans Act, are targeted to meet the highest priority needs of persons 60 years of age and older. A volunteer allocations committee reviewed all grant applications and recommended funding for the following programs. The Advisory Council concurred and the Board of Directors approved the recommendations.

Agencies receiving funds in central Worcester County include: the Age Center of Worcester for Financial Counseling, \$8,706; Nutrition, \$451,280; and the Nursing Home Ombudsman program, \$104,392; Elder Services of Worcester Area for Crisis Intervention, \$23,140; Centro Las Americas for Hispanic Outreach, \$25,306; and Worcester Executive Office of Elder Affairs for Osteoporosis Prevention, \$7,000.

Agencies receiving funds in north Worcester County include: Leominster Spanish American Center for Ancianos Latinos Unidos, \$29,757; Montachusett Home Care Corporation for Crisis Intervention, \$23,410;

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SENIOR SPECTACULAR

A SMASHING EVENT!



Tuesday, October 25 saw a new addition to the senior events that take place in central Massachusetts. Sponsored primarily by Fallon Community Health Plan and the Worcester Telegram and Gazette, the "**Senior Spectacular**" was held at the DCU Center in Worcester.



In spite of a wet and raging nor'easter, the "Senior Spectacular" was a tremendous success that brought nearly 800 seniors and caregivers to look for information, win raffles, listen to music, and have a great time. Special guest was Joe Shortsleeve of CBS4 in Boston.

Bob Dwyer, CMAA Executive Director, participated in an informational session on Medicare Part D facilitated by Kathie Metzger of Fallon Community Health Plan. Amy Vogel-Waters, Director of the City of Worcester Department of Elder Affairs also participated.

CMAA would like to thank Fallon and the T&G, and all the sponsors, for allowing us to participate in what will hopefully be a successful yearly event.

Awards Continued

Medical Transportation, \$3,120; Money Management, \$11,514; and the Nursing Home Ombudsman program, \$72,029; Montachusett Opportunity Council for Elder Home Repair, \$29,975; and Nutrition, \$295,831.

The agencies receiving funds in south Worcester County include: Busy Bee Transportation for Medical Transportation, \$16,800; Tri-Valley Elder Services for Crisis Intervention, \$ 26,000; Medical Transportation, \$3,575; Money Management, \$7,841; Nutrition, \$314,631; and the Nursing Home Ombudsman program, \$ 67,495.

Agencies serving elders in multiple sub-areas include: Central Mass Housing Alliance for Elder Home Repair, \$52,050; Jewish Family Service for Guardianship, \$46,660; Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Mass for Senior Citizens Law and Advocacy, \$ 110,500; MAB Community Services for Elder Rehabilitation, \$10,000; Medical Transportation, \$ 3,000; New England Homes for the Deaf, Drop-In Center, \$4,375; and the VNA Care Network for Medication Management, \$11,284.

For additional information, please contact Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging at 1-800-244-3032 (V/TDD) or visit our website www.seniorconnection.org.

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Fall/Winter 2005

NOVEMBER IS CAREGIVERS MONTH!

In a very special tradition, remember that November is National Caregivers Month. Each year we take this opportunity to alert all of us that caregivers are important.

Here in Central Massachusetts, it is estimated that there are nearly 60,000 caregivers of elders in our midst.

Across the nation, billions of dollars in productivity are lost each year as caregivers take care of their loved ones, their neighbors and their friends.

Are you a caregiver? Do you help an aging parent or relative? Do you rake leaves for your elderly neighbor? Do you bring your aunt or uncle to the store each week?

If any of this is even vaguely familiar to you, and you would like more information, call the CMAA SeniorConnection staff. They will assist you in navigating the aging and caregiver networks, helping you find answers and help.



And, if you have internet access, seek out the Connection for Caregivers at www.SeniorConnection.org. Special articles and other information are there to help you make it through the day of caring for an elder at home.