

Seniors' Connection

To the High Country

Area Agency on Aging Plans 2nd Legislative Brunch *with a focus on aging*

The Senior Tar Heel Legislature (STHL) representing the High Country has been hard at work developing the 2010 Legislative Brunch, scheduled for **April 20, 2010** at the LaQuinta Inn & Suites in Boone. The Legislative Brunch is hosted annually by the Region D STHL's to recognize the work of the North Carolina General Assembly members serving our area and to provide a forum for advocacy on behalf of older adults and their families. Attendees are given an opportunity to give comments as well as network with elected officials.



The North Carolina STHL was created with the passage of Senate Bill 479 (1993) to provide information to older adults on the legislative process and matters being considered by the General Assembly; to promote advocacy concerning aging issues; and to assess the legislative needs of older adults. As they have worked to carry out their legislative mandate over the past 15 years, the STHL's have been extremely effective in bringing positive change for the older adult population, especially in the area of funding for much needed resources.

The STHL and the Area Agency on Aging would like to request your attendance at the 2nd Annual Legislative Brunch to assist us in bringing older adult issues to the forefront in our communities as well as with the local legislators in hopes that through education and awareness the challenges older adults face will improve.



To attend, please pre-register by emailing Tonia Cook, High Country Area Agency on Aging, at tcook@regiond.org or by calling 828-265-5434, Ext. 113 so that ample seating will be available.

If you are unable to attend but would like to assist us in this project, please spread the word of this opportunity to anyone who would like to share their concerns, as this event is open to the public.

Together we can make a difference!

Notes From Your Ombudsman

Community Advisory Committee NEWS

Vacancies

Wilkes County:
Nursing Home 1
Rest Home 1

Alleghany County 2
Avery County 1
Mitchell County 1

New Members:
None

If you are interested in serving as a CAC member in your county, or if you would like to learn more about how to volunteer at a local facility, please contact Alex Jernigan at 828-265-5434, Ext. 126. Time that is volunteered is time well spent!

New Nursing Home Survey Guidelines Emphasize Home-like Environment

Slowly but surely the concept of changing the nursing home environment from institutional to “homelike” is progressing. Nursing Home Surveyors will begin interviewing residents to determine to what extent they have control over their lives. It’s called Culture Change and it’s about:

- placing the power to decide back in the resident’s hands so decisions are made by them rather than about them
- it’s about taking resident’s needs and desires into account
- it’s about making their own choices
- It’s about dignity, respect and self-determination
- It’s about all of us finding better words to describe staff, programs, parts of the building and the industry itself
- It’s about learning about the resident’s personal quirks and fears
- It’s about getting away from facility centered care: cleaning the rooms, administering medications, herding residents to and from activities and meals.

Surveyors will be interviewing and observing to determine if residents are given a choice as to when they would like to get up and when they would like to eat; residents are dressed and groomed to satisfy their personal preferences; residents are encouraged to dress in their own clothes rather a hospital gown; residents participate in preferred activities; residents are bathed when and how they prefer; residents physical environment is personalized and accessible by the resident; staff interacts with residents in a way that takes into account their physical limitations; and much more.....

Please Visit Someone in a Nursing Home

High Country RAPP's *Holidays for Kids* Program

We all know that the holidays are a time of joy and good spirit for everyone but it is important to remember that for some, it is a season of penny pinching and striving just to make ends meet, keeping food on



the table and heat in the home.

This often makes it difficult for those who wish to give their family a bountiful Christmas but do not have the means to do so. This Christmas the High Country RAPP invited others to immerse themselves in the spirit of giving by creating an angel tree for children who were enrolled in the Relatives as Parents Program. Due to the wonderful response

from High Country Council of Governments' staff and the Student Association of Social Workers (ASU Chapter) each child was able to receive Christmas presents at the annual *Holidays for Kids* celebration. In addition, their caregivers received gift bags, including scrap books created by the children and a \$50 Wal-mart gift card, while also enjoying a catered dinner.

If you are interested in making a difference in the life of a kinship care family, please contact Brenda Reece for information about volunteer or donation opportunities.



2009 Ombudsman's Snapshot



The Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Program works to enhance the quality of care and the quality of life of the region's 2200 residents of long-term care facilities. This goal is accomplished through interaction with the resident, their families, concerned citizens, nursing and rest care home staff, and public agencies. A Long Term Care Ombudsman is a professional who serves as an advocate for long term care residents. Advocacy efforts include educating individuals about their rights as well as the complex rules and regulations that govern the long term care system. The Ombudsman receives requests to investigate concerns, and serves as a mediator for conflict resolution if residents encounter difficulty in exercising their rights. The Ombudsman also provides technical assistance to facility staff, Community Advisory Committee members, and the general public on issues related to individuals in long term care facilities. Over the past year, the High Country Ombudsman Program investigated 30 complaints concerning long term care facilities in the seven county region, provided technical assistance to 184 people, visited the long term care facilities 192 times, and provided 82 trainings and participated in 11 presentations to the public and service agencies. Additionally, the Community Advisory Committee members volunteered over 1,200 hours of services.

Stress occurs when we work too much, sleep too little, try to cope with difficult or troubling situations, and when we neglect to take good care of ourselves—all of which are typically everyday state of conditions for the millions of Americans who find themselves in the role of caregiver to an older frail, ill, or disabled relative.

If you are a family caregiver, consider the following suggestions and think about which ones you can put in place to help ease your feelings of stress:

- ✚ Set manageable expectations and limits for yourself.
- ✚ Ask for and accept help! Let other family members and friends know what they can do to share in the responsibility of caregiving.
- ✚ Maintain or establish social interaction with friends and other family members. Isolation can further increase feelings of stress.
- ✚ If the older adult you are caring for has dementia, avoid overly stimulating environments since that can add to their anxiety and end up increasing your stress level.
- ✚ Don't abandon healthful eating and drinking habits.
- ✚ Seek emotional and moral support from other caregivers – there is a great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- ✚ Use community resources such as meal or shopping services, home care aides, adult day care services, and/or volunteer help from faith-based organizations or civic groups.
- ✚ Exercise regularly. Even if it means finding someone else to take over your caregiver duties, getting regularly-scheduled exercise—for example, walking, swimming, yoga, biking, or aerobics—can be of tremendous benefit to both your physical and emotional well-being.
- ✚ Try to find time for yourself to do something you especially enjoy such as reading, walking, listening to music, gardening and/or visiting with a friend.
- ✚ Find ways to ensure you get enough rest.
- ✚ If you experience any signs of depression (for example, extreme sadness, trouble concentrating, withdrawal, or hopelessness), don't delay in getting professional help for yourself. Depression is a serious, but very treatable condition. If left untreated, depression does not “just go away”, instead, the symptoms progressively worsen and can even become debilitating.

As a family caregiver, you are doing a very hard job and deserve understanding, support and quality time for yourself to help ensure you meet your own emotional needs.

Relatives As Parents Program (R.A.P.P.)

Receives 2nd Year Funding from the Brookdale Foundation

Representatives of the Brookdale Foundation recently conducted a site evaluation of the High Country Relatives as Parents Program and as a result, the program has been awarded second year funding. The additional funding will be used to further support the families enrolled in the program.

The Brookdale Foundation provides funding for programs that provide resources for grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting.



Melinda Perez-Porter conducted the program evaluation and reports that she

was quite impressed with the progress the program has made since its creation in the summer of 2008. Relative caregivers often

face a variety of problems, such as legal, social, financial, emotional, marital and physical health, in their efforts to raise a grandchild, younger sibling, cousin, niece or nephew. To



assist them in their efforts High Country R.A.P.P., the region's first program exclusively for grandparents raising grandchildren and other kinship care families, provides a variety of resources including: information and assistance, monthly support groups, educational seminars, Holidays for Kids, a resource lending library, and financial assistance with legal fees, school-related expenses, recreational programs and summer camps. If you would like more information about the program or would like to refer a family, please contact Brenda Reece at (828) 265-5434, ext 128 or breece@regiond.org.

ASU Social Work Interns Provide Much Needed

Social Work interns, *Lauren Absher* and *Deidre Talbert*, provided hundreds of hours of invaluable assistance to the High Country Area Agency on Aging while completing their social work field placement. Among the multiple programs and activities they assisted with are: NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature, High Country Caregiver Foundation, High Country RAPP, monitoring visits, faith-based initiatives and outreach to the African-American and Hispanic communities. We would like to thank and congratulate both of these talented ladies as they continue to pursue their career and educational goals. Well done ladies!

NATIONAL CENTER ON ELDER ABUSE AWARD



The High Country Area Agency on Aging has received one of only twelve competitive grant awards given nationwide by the National Center on Elder Abuse. This grant award will provide

funding and technical assistance from the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse to build multi-disciplinary teams, who will develop strategies addressing the detection, intervention and prevention of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Counties included in this award are Mitchell and Yancey.

According to a recent study nearly 13 percent of older Americans suffer from some form of abuse. No one knows the exact number or who the specific victims are. Abuse, neglect and exploitation of disabled adults continue to remain largely under-recognized and under-reported. Many of the victims suffer in silence. Some are not able to report what has been happening to them. No community, county or country in the world is immune to this problem. Protecting those who cannot protect themselves is the responsibility of everyone---the whole community. Multi-disciplinary teams have been found to be very effective in mobilizing the community to help protect our most vulnerable disabled adults.

Types of Elder Abuse

The National Center on Elder Abuse defines seven different types of elder abuse: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; financial exploitation; neglect; abandonment; and self neglect.

These definitions are based on an analysis of existing State and Federal definitions of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation conducted by the Center in 1995.

§ **Physical abuse.** Use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment.

§ **Sexual Abuse.** Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person.

§ **Emotional abuse.** Infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or non-verbal acts.

§ **Financial/material exploitation.** Illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets.

§ **Neglect.** Refusal, or failure, to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elderly person.

Outstanding **Senior Tar Heel** Legislature Member!



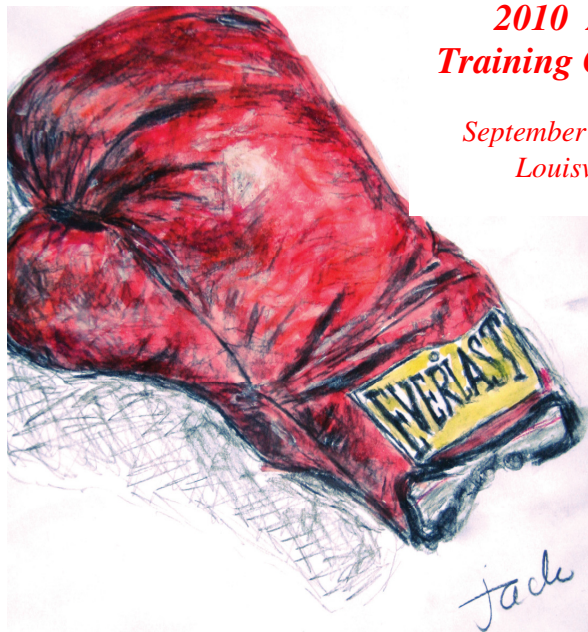
Betty Knight, Wilkes County STHL Delegate, won the award for the Most Outstanding Senior Tar Heel/Advisory Committee on Aging Member at the High Country COG Annual Banquet. In her absence, Glenn Mitchell, Wilkes County Alternate, accepted the award on her behalf.

High Country Area Agency on Aging
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Our Vision: A community where all older adults enjoy independence with dignity and respect; wherein, we as the Area Agency on Aging strive to facilitate, collaborate and partner with other agencies and organizations whose vision is enriching the quality of life of older adults and caregivers.

SE4A
2010 Annual
Training Conference

September 26-29, 2010
Louisville, KY



HIGH COUNTRY
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AGING STAFF

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