

Seniors' Connection

To the High Country



Senior Tar Heel Legislature **Celebrate 15 Successful Years!**

It's hard to believe that fifteen years will soon have passed since the creation of the Senior Tar Heel Legislature (STHL) by the North Carolina General Assembly with the passage of Senate Bill 479 in July 1993. The vision of the STHL includes: 1) Providing information to older adults on the legislative process and matters being considered by the North Carolina General Assembly; 2) Promote citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the North Carolina General Assembly; and 3) Assessing the legislative needs of older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly. To press forward with their goals, each of the one hundred North Carolina Counties has one Delegate and one Alternate with support staff provided by the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services staff as well as the seventeen Area Agencies on Aging.

The STHL has accomplished various missions over the past fifteen years, which includes: 1) Expanding Medicaid coverage to older and disabled adults eligible for Supplemental Security Income and to those with incomes up to 100% of the federal poverty level; 2) Significantly increased funding for home and community based services for older adults; 3) Passed legislation to require criminal background checks of employees in adult care homes, nursing homes, and home care agencies; 4) Increased funding to expand adult protective services in the state; 5) Provided funding to ensure that the Medicaid Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA) remains a viable service for older and disabled adults in the state; among countless others.



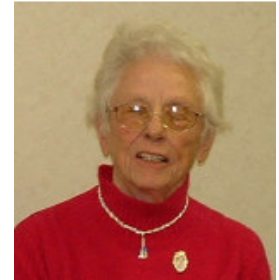
STHL Members (Left to Right): RACHEL DEAL, Avery Delegate and Region D's only original member to the STHL; CLARA MILLER, Ashe Delegate; CLIFFORD PHILLIPS, Alleghany Delegate; and "BUNK" SPANN, Watauga Delegate.

Currently, the STHL has their energy dedicated to the Fiscal Year 2008 Legislative Priorities: 1) Increase funding for home and community based services for older adults by increasing the Home and Community Care Block Grant by \$5 million; 2) Increase funding for senior centers by \$634,684 for a total of \$2 million per year; 3) Appropriate an additional \$15,000 in Recurring Funds for the operation of the Senior Tar Heel Legislature; 4) Provide Dental Care for Older Adults with Special Needs and in Rural Areas; and 5) Provide funding to sustain Project C.A.R.E. For more information, visit: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/sthl.htm>.

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED



The Watauga County STHL Delegate, "Bunk" Spann (left), was elected the Senior Tar Heel Legislature/Advisory Committee on Aging (STHL/ACA) Chairperson and Rachel Deal (right), Avery County STHL Delegate, was elected Vice Chairperson at the December 11, 2007 quarterly meeting of the High Country (Region



D) Senior Tar Heel Legislature/Advisory Committee on Aging (STHL/ACA) members.

North Carolina Senior Games

Join Us for a Celebration of the Human Spirit



Blue Ridge Senior Games (April 16th – May 16th)

Serving Alleghany, Ashe and Wilkes Counties

Contact: Angela Williams (336-670-2644 or email: wilkessrcenter@embarqmail.com)

High Country Senior Games (May 17th – June 12th)

Serving Avery, Mitchell, Watauga and Yancey Counties

Contact: Holly Goodwin (828-264-9511 or email: holly.goodwin@ncmail.net)

Senior Games is a wellness and prevention program to keep the body, mind and spirit fit while enjoying the company of friends, family, spectators and volunteers.



6TH ANNUAL ADULT SERVICES COALITION OF WATAUGA COUNTY EXPO

WHEN: MAY 20TH

WHERE: BOONE MALL

For additional information, contact Brenda Reece, Coalition Member, at 828-265-5434, 128 or via email at breece@regiond.org.

High Country Area Plan on Aging (2008 – 2012)



The staff at the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is in the process of developing the High Country Area Plan on Aging for 2008-2012. Among other things, the Plan will guide the AAA staff's work with Each of the seven counties seeking to meet the challenges of a growing population of older adults and the opportunities they bring to the community.

One of the most crucial parts of the planning process and the Plan is local input. To gain this input, we have conducted planning forums in six of the seven counties, as well as surveying the current program partners. A planning forum was not conducted in Ashe County; in that, they are preparing to finalize a five-year plan for older adults. In Ashe's comprehensive planning efforts and with the forums in the six other counties, we considered a broad range of conditions, issues, and services affecting the lives of older adults and their families, even some that are considered outside the traditional concerns. We wanted to capture opportunities as well as challenges, focusing on what communities and the older adult can do to assist with successful aging. All seven identified several initiatives they feel will enhance their communities in preparing for tomorrow.

Some of the initiatives identified by the counties include service accessibility, housing, health promotion activities, help for those living in isolation, wellness campaigns, promoting abuse/neglect awareness. Moreover, all seven counties identified dental care services as a need. Selection of which initiative to include in the Plan will be based on the following factors: those doable, available partners in the county, identified needs of older adults, and resources that could be made available to the initiative.

It is our desire to work together with the counties to build livable and senior-friendly communities. Livable and senior-friendly means different things to different people. Everyone wants to live in a friendly and livable place. Primarily, older adults desire to remain as independent as possible and have as many choices as possible to maintain quality of life and dignity. Common elements in such communities are affordable and appropriate housing, transportation, access to services including health care, nearby shopping, safety, civic and social engagement opportunities --- all are keys to successful aging.

To comment on this process or to share needs/resources, please contact Anita Davie, AAA Director, at 828-265-5434, Ext. 122 or via email at adavie@regiond.org.

Notes From Your Ombudsman

Alex Jernigan

Community Advisory Committee NEWS

Vacancies

Wilkes County:
Nursing Home 2
Rest Home 2

Alleghany County 1

New Members:
Donna Shumate
Wilkes NH Committee

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!

Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Residents of nursing home and adult care homes have the right to be free from Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation. When you are visiting residents, be mindful of unexplained bruises, cuts, scrapes and other injury of unknown origin. We alert when residents avoid eye contact, hesitate to talk openly or exhibit withdrawn, suspicious or paranoid behavior. If you notice a radical change in a resident's behavior, report it to the Administrator. The facility should have a policy and procedure to investigate and determine if abuse has occurred. You should also report to Adult Protective Services if after talking to the Administrator you feel there was abuse and that it has not been investigated and reported. Remember to listen closely as symptoms of urinary tract infection, medication reactions and dementia often affect resident behavior.

What is considered Abuse?

Physically Abusive Behavior is hitting, pinching, poking, pushing, pulling slapping, kicking, punching, biting twisting etc.

Verbally Abusive Behavior is talking to the resident as if they were a child, threatening, cursing at or around the resident, calling them names or coercing them into action.

Exploitation is an unexplained loss of money, unpaid facility bills, mismanagement of personal funds and inappropriate sexual activity.

When visiting residents ask how they believe they are treated. Questions like "do they talk nicely to you?" and "Do they handle you gently?" will help. If you receive a negative response, try to get as many facts as possible like the time of day, day of the week, name or description of the abuser. Talk to other residents on the hall to see if they have the same experiences.

PLEASE VISIT



AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTIONS [ADRC] COMMUNITY READINESS FORUM March 26, 2008

The ADRC grant program was developed to assist states and communities in their efforts to create a coordinated system of information and access for all persons seeking long term support and services. ADRC's minimize confusion about how to access services, enhance individual choice and support informed decision-making. Also, ADRC is considered to be one of the primary vehicles to modernize the fragmented service delivery system. The initiative is not about adding new services but rather building on existing community infrastructure and realigning systems and processes.

The Forum will provide information on what is an ADRC and facilitate local conversation among agencies about their interest and readiness for an ADRC. Also, announcements will be made about grant availability.

It is not too late to register for the Forum, which is scheduled for March 26th at AHEC (Watauga Medical Center). To register: email ADRCforums@ncmail.net or call 1-919-855-4428. REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 17TH.



CheckMeds NC has the potential for far reaching impact whether 1 client or all of the approximately 530,000 eligibles are served. The value to one senior in terms of health and quality of life is immeasurable. To the Medicaid/Medicare programs and private insurance companies, the dollars saved will prove to be significant.

CheckMeds NC is NC's Medication Therapy Management Program that involves pharmacists with helping seniors with medication issues. This Program covers patient-specific services by a CheckMeds NC network pharmacist including a comprehensive medication review to identify, resolve, and prevent medication-related problems; monitoring and evaluating the senior's response to therapy; and providing education to enhance compliance with medication treatment.

To qualify a patient, they must be a NC resident, age 65 or older, and participating in a Medicare Prescription Drug Program (Part D).

CheckMeds NC is funded by the Health and Wellness Trust Fund and implemented through the NC Office of Rural Health. Visit www.checkmedsnc.com to learn more.





Recent Collaboration Addresses the Needs of Employee Caregivers



Millions of men and women struggle to balance job demands with the responsibility of caring for an older relative—and the numbers are increasing every day. Employers feel the cost in lost productivity and turnover due to the elder care crisis. Working caregivers also feel the cost in terms of stress, negative health effects, as well as disruptions in employment.

The High Country Area Agency on Aging's Family Caregiver Support Program has developed an initiative that strives to bring attention and focus to the issues and costs of caregivers in the workplace. It identifies and provides solutions to reduce the financial and social costs to employers and their employees, creating a WIN-WIN solution.

Elder Care and Work: Finding the Balance is an informative seminar that teaches attendees to use specific strategies to successfully cope with a wide variety of issues surrounding elder care and informs them of resources that are available in the workplace and local community. Brenda Reece, High Country Area Agency on Aging's Family Caregiver Support Specialist, and Ingrid Kraus, Interim Director of Counseling for Faculty and Staff, presented the first part of a two-part seminar on February 29th, with the second session scheduled for March 18th. Angie Miller, ASU Office of Human Resources' Benefits Director, will be participating in the second session. Ms. Miller will focus on the ways that ASU benefits can assist employees in balancing elder care and work.

Many employers throughout the country are losing large amounts of money in lost productivity through absenteeism, distractions at work and turnover related to elder care issues. More alarming is the fact that working caregivers lose, on average, \$659,000 in lifetime earnings due to: coming to work late and/or leaving early, taking unpaid leaves of absences or using vacation or sick time to care for a loved one, refusing or being passed over for promotions, declining overtime and taking on new assignments due to their caregiving responsibilities.

While balancing work and caregiving responsibilities is never easy, resources are available as well as effective strategies that can be developed to benefit both the caregiver and the employer. The key to success is the education of employed caregivers as well as their immediate supervisors.



Brenda Reece, High Country AAA (Left) with Ingrid Kraus, ASU.

The most important factor for society to realize is that caregiving is a job. Like all jobs, proper training plays an important role in doing the job well and in balance with the continued responsibilities of the workplace.



Regional Conference takes to the Road

For the first time in Region D's history, the High Country Area Agency on Aging and the each of the local senior centers have partnered to highlight the talents of older adults by offering an ART SAFARI in each county that utilizes the resources and talents unique to each county. We encourage all ages to attend the **FREE admission** events! It will be a spectacular opportunity to admire art from older adults as well as to witness demonstrations, including wood carving, canvas painting, quilting, ceramics, and much more!

In addition to the live demonstrations by local older adults, each event will also feature local artists, which will encourage you to visit their studio. Some senior centers in the region will provide transportation for older adults to participate in the local studio tour but keep in mind independent tours are welcomed. Don't pass up this opportunity to witness the **1st Annual Regional ART SAFARI** as the contributions of older adults in Region D are recognized for their talent. **Events are scheduled beginning April 24th through May 17th.** Please contact your local senior center to discover the details and date of their event.



After February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations will broadcast only in digital. If you use rabbit ears or a rooftop antenna with your analog TV, you are going to need to take action to continue watching TV.

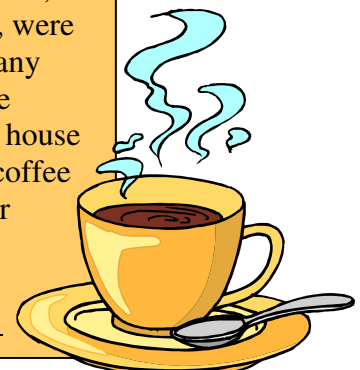
What can you do? You have three options: 1) Buy a converter box that will plug into your analog TV (\$40 Government Coupons available to help pay for the cost of certified TV converter boxes. Expected cost \$50-\$70); 2) Buy a TV with a digital tuner; or 3) Connect your analog TV to cable, satellite or other pay services.

For more information or to request coupons, call 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY) or visit www.DTV2009.gov.

What's this, a Senior Coffee Shop??

Cheers to the Alleghany Senior Center staff for thinking outside the box. As Starbucks closed for a few hours for the first time in history (February 26, 2008), Janis Fender, Director, and Karon Edwards, Assistant Director, were completing the final work to open a Senior Coffee Shop at the Alleghany Senior Center. The "doors" of the coffee shop will open in April. The coffee shop will be open on Thursday evenings. Picture this... coffee house décor, awnings on the windows, latte, cappuccinos, espresso, special coffee blends, internet access, a great place of social engagement, a forum for current events, or just an exciting place to hang out.

Look for more on this story in the next edition of Seniors' Connection.



High Country Area Agency on Aging
P.O. Box 1820
Boone, NC 28607
828-265-5434

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.

**HIGH COUNTRY
AREA AGENCY ON
AGING STAFF**

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**Don't miss future, quarterly newsletters!
www.regiond.org/aging/newsletter.html**