



June 2004

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Message from the Assistant Secretary: Older Americans Month Wrap-Up

AoA celebrated Older Americans Month 2004 in a big way this May with a broad range of activities including a national photography contest, a Program Champion Initiative, and many events across the country. We highlighted the theme, "Aging Well, Living Well" as part of these activities in order to recognize older Americans who are living longer, healthier, and more productive lives. I was pleased to participate, along with Edwin Walker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs and the Regional Administrators, in a number of events to celebrate Older Americans Month. These events included:

- April 28: Tribal Listening Session and site visits to Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations, Rapid City, South Dakota;
- May 11: AoA, SAMHSA, and FDA Work to Help Keep America's Older Citizens Safe and Healthy, Washington, DC.
- May 11: Fit for Life annual citywide conference, Chicago Department for Aging, Chicago, Illinois;
- May 13: Town Hall Forum to Discuss Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit, Miami, Florida;
- May 18: "Movin & Grooving through the Ages," Stark County Senior Day Keynote address, Canton, Ohio;
- May 20: National Governors Association meeting session on long term care trends, Chicago, Illinois; and
- May 26: "Activity...A Choice You Can Live With," National Senior Health and Fitness Day, Landover, Maryland.

I was inspired by my interaction with tribal leaders at the Tribal Listening Session. I was truly impressed by the dedicated and talented professionals I met at each of these events. I was amazed by the high level of energy of the many older adults who participated in swimming, walking, line dancing, exercise, aerobics, and Tai Chi at the National Senior Health and Fitness Day event in Maryland. Congratulations to

everyone in the U.S. who celebrated Older Americans Month to honor our older citizens.

Josefina G. Carbonell

Policy Committee Members Selected for White House Conference on Aging

On May 19, the President and members of Congress completed their selection of 17 members of the Policy Committee for the White House Conference on Aging. The Honorable Dorcas R. Hardy, former Commissioner of the Social Security Administration will serve as chairperson of the Committee. Dr. Ann McGee, former Commissioner of the Virginia Department on Aging, will serve as Executive Director. The White House Conferences on Aging have convened every 10 years and have served as catalysts for aging policy for more than 40 years. The Conferences have prompted the establishment of key initiatives such as the Supplemental Security Income program, and influenced societal changes in the private and public sectors on retirement, health care, transportation, housing, and economic security. For more information go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040416-7.html>, <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040416.html>, or to view a complete list of committee members visit: http://www.aoa.gov/press/news/2004/06_Jun/WHCOA_policy_members.pdf.

United States Signs Tobacco Control Treaty

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson signed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on Monday, May 11 at the United Nations in New York on behalf of the United States. This framework convention is the first-ever global public health treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization. The treaty serves as an important basis for advancing public health worldwide. It encourages other nations to establish standards similar to the ones set for tobacco prevention and control domestically in the United States. For example, the treaty contains a strong U.S.-drafted provision against tobacco smuggling, which could help prevent illicit trade in tobacco. Tobacco is still the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and adversely affects large numbers of people worldwide. Of persons aged 65+, Nearly 12 percent of men and 9 percent of women in the U.S. smoked cigarettes as of 2001. The treaty is open for signature until June 29. The treaty will take effect after 40 nations have ratified it; 12 nations have ratified the FCTC so far. The next step for the treaty in the United States is submission to the Senate, following completion of further interagency review of the treaty. For more information visit: <http://www.dhhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040511.html>.

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For the full issue of the June AoA e-news visit: (url to be inserted) .

AoA News

AoA Participated in the Mexican Aging Congress

The Assistant Secretary for Aging gave a keynote address at the Mexican Aging Congress on June 16 in Mexico City, Mexico. Hosted by the Mexican National Institute on Aging, the Congress honored the 25th anniversary of the Institute and followed-up on the World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid. Approximately 300-500 people attended from the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean, and elsewhere. AoA also organized a panel "Aging Well, Living Well: Opportunities in the United States." The panel, composed of U.S. experts in aging, discussed some of the latest federal initiatives to help older people lead better, healthier, and longer lives. For further information, contact Marla Bush at marla.bush@aoa.gov.

Policy and Program Updates

AoA, SAMHSA, and FDA Work to Help Keep Older Adults Safe and Healthy

On May 11, AoA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Food and Drug Administration joined forces to warn older Americans of the dangers of mixing certain prescription drugs and alcohol. Two percent of people 55 and older who abuse prescription narcotic medications are admitted annually to hospitals according to data from SAMHSA. They released "As You Age" educational

materials that are geared to help draw attention to the need to manage prescription medications and about the dangers of mixing some medications with alcohol. AoA also released the Older Americans kit that provides useful information to help educate older people and their caregivers about programs and services available to assist them. For more information visit:

http://www.aoa.gov/press/pr/2004/05_May/05_11_04.asp.

Federal Reserve Board Publications on Risky Home Loans

The Federal Reserve Board has a message for homeowners who need money to pay bills or for home repairs. Their message is, "Putting Your Home on the Loan Line is Risky Business." FRB has publications online in English and Spanish that can help homeowners, particularly older adults protect themselves from unscrupulous lenders, who often target the poor and elderly by deceiving into loans they can't repay. To access these publications go to:

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/riskyhomeloans/>.

Grantee Spotlight

Rosebud Reservation Breaks New Ground in Offering Caregiver Support

The Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota has used their creativity to help Native American caregivers in the Sioux tribe on the Reservation. With AoA Native American Caregiver Support Program Demonstration funding, the Rosebud Reservation established a special account with a local gas company for caregivers who own their own vehicles but lack resources to purchase gas to attend health events, caregiver events, or emergency appointments. Accounts with local car and tire repair shops have been established for the caregiver participants who lack resources for car repairs. Another challenge facing the program was that many caregivers received temporary assistance to needy families, known as the TANF program, which required them to work outside the home for 25 to 30 hours a week to receive their benefits. This took them away from home and the elder they care for, leaving them with limited care options. The program Director's request to allow these individuals to perform their required hours at home caring for their loved ones was approved in March 2003. AoA acknowledged the work of the Rosebud Reservation through the Older Americans Month Champion of the Day Initiative. To learn more about the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Native American Caregiver Support Program contact Sharon Swift at 605-747-2960 or by email at rstcare@gwtc.net

Making a Difference

The Sunshine Bus Provides Transportation to Older adults

Redesigning services can provide a practical way to meet the needs of older adults. Such is the case of the Sunshine Bus operating in St. Augustine, Florida. The Sunshine Bus stops at every corner along its route, not just at designated stops making it accessible to many older adults, children, and others. It attracts a population who the local public transportation system would otherwise be unable to serve. The St. John's County Council on Aging has operated this service since 2001, and because it meets the needs of a variety of groups, it has been financially successful. The Sunshine Bus provides an innovative model for public transportation that could be considered by other communities

that are looking common sense strategies for transportation solutions. For more information visit: <http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/senior/sunshine-bus.asp>.

Of Interest

National Alzheimer's Disease Education Conference

The National Alzheimer's Disease Education Conference will take place July 16-18 in Philadelphia. Sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association, the conference is the premier gathering of its kind where nationally recognized health care and social service professionals gather to share their expertise in dementia care. For details about early registration go to: <http://www.alz.org/educationconference/overview.htm>

Arthritis Prevalence in the United States

On May 20, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new facts about the prevalence of Arthritis in the United States. Arthritis is the leading cause of physical disability in the United States. Arthritis comprises over 100 different disease and conditions. The most common are osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and gout. Arthritis is estimated to cost \$51 billion in medical costs and \$86 billion in total costs. Arthritis limits everyday activities for 8 million Americans. According to CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, which provides the main source of state arthritis data, 49 million American adults reported doctor-diagnosed arthritis and another 21 million reported chronic joint symptoms in 2001. The number of people age 65 and older who have arthritis or chronic joint symptoms is projected to nearly double from 21.4 million in 2001 to 41.4 million in 2030 as the population ages. Older adults 65 years of age or older have the highest risk of arthritis (58.8 percent). Arthritis was noticeably higher for women (37.3 percent) than for men (28.4 percent). Research shows that physical activity decreases joint pain, improves function and delays disability. In addition, maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding joint injuries reduces the risk of developing arthritis and decreases disease progression. For more information go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/fs040513.htm>.

Caregiving for Older Americans With Depressive Symptoms

The May issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry* published a study that gives nationally representative estimates of the additional time and cost associated with informal caregiving for older Americans with depressive symptoms. The authors found that depressive symptoms in elderly persons are independently associated with significantly higher levels of informal caregiving, even after the effects of major coexisting chronic conditions are adjusted. The additional hours of care attributable to depressive symptoms represent a significant time commitment for family members and, therefore, a significant societal economic cost. <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/161/5/857>.

Study Shows Older Americans Need More Public Transportation Options

A national study shows that more than half of all non-drivers age 65 and over stay at home on a given day, many because of limited transportation options. This trend is particularly troublesome as the large baby boom generation of Americans grows older. "Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options," released on April 14 by the

Surface Transportation Policy Project, in Washington D.C., in collaboration with AARP and the American Public Transportation Association, concludes that as Americans grow older, our existing transportation network is unable to meet the needs of the nation's aging population particularly as they become less willing and able to drive. "*Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options*," is a report based on new analysis of the National Household Transportation Survey of 2001 by STPP, including information from previous research. To view a full copy of the study, visit www.transact.org.

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About AoA

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at aoainfo@aoa.gov; or visit us on the Web at www.aoa.gov.

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