

## AoA e-news

### The U.S. Administration on Aging

#### November 2003, Volume I, Issue 9

The U.S. Administration on Aging is pleased to send you the **AoA e-news**, an e-newsletter filled with key information and news for the National Aging Services Network.

#### We Welcome Your Feedback!

AoA wants to identify ways to improve the *AoA e-news*. Please answer five questions about the e-news anytime between now and November 19 by clicking on:  
<http://www.keysurvey.com/survey/15066/1123/>.

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### **Message from the Assistant Secretary**

#### **Raising Awareness about the Availability of Caregiver Support Services**

This month, as we observe National Family Caregivers Month we also celebrate the enactment of the AoA National Family Caregiver Support Program in the year 2000. We are so pleased that the National Aging Services Network is taking advantage of this opportunity to raise public awareness about the availability of caregiver support services and help caregivers find much needed services. The AoA Regional Administrators have alerted us about many impressive activities planned for observing Family Caregivers Month. I am proud to participate in National Family Caregivers Month Activities in New York City where I will talk with caregivers about their experiences, present a keynote address at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual New York City Mayoral Conference on Alzheimer's Disease, speak with Hispanic service providers, and conduct site visits to organizations serving older Americans. This month's activities are a great example of the spirit of cooperation among us for providing support to family caregivers and easy consumer access to information and services. AoA offers suggestions for activities and provides support materials for observing National Family Caregivers Month on our Web site at: [http://www.aoa.gov/press/nfc\\_month/nfc\\_month.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/press/nfc_month/nfc_month.asp).

#### **National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month**

Improving services and support for family caregivers is a fundamental part of creating a more balanced long-term care system that is responsive to the needs and preferences of older persons. We are dedicated to helping older persons stay at home and in their communities longer by increasing the availability of home and community-based care. AoA and partners in the National Aging Services Network have already reached out to more than four million individuals with information and other services since 2000, when the National Family Caregiver Support Program was established as part of the Older Americans Act. Let's build on this work to give our citizens the community care they want and deserve.

In addition to celebrating National Family Caregivers Month, November is also National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. President George H. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 as "National American Indian Heritage Month." We have continued to recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of the American Indians and Alaska Natives. AoA has partnered with the HHS agencies to celebrate this year's theme, "Strengthening the Spirit." Many Tribes, States, and communities have planned ceremonies and activities to honor Tribal traditions and our Title VI grantees will be honoring Tribal elders. We encourage you to participate in these special activities. In

addition to statistical information about this population, the Census Bureau has developed quotes and radio sound bites that can be used to promote National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. This information can be found at:

<http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/aminhot1.html>.

Josefina G. Carbonell

## **What's Happening at AoA**

### **Celebrating National Family Caregivers Month**

AoA has received numerous reports about the many exciting events that will be held across the country in November in honor of National Family Caregivers Month. For example, the Southeastern offices of DHHS's AoA, Administration for Children and Families, and Public Health Science/Office of Women's Health will convene a "*Grandparents as Caregivers Summit*," November 12, 2003 in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme for the one-day event is: "*Taking Care of Others: The Balancing Act*." The Summit will focus on sharing information, referral, and resource support for these caregivers. During the past year, the three agencies facilitated the formation of a consortium of federal, state, educational, and community organizations to develop a "caregiver model" designed to educate and address issues faced by grandparents who are primary caregivers for their grandchildren. The members of the consortium explored these issues during Town Hall Listening Sessions in three metropolitan Atlanta counties with the highest percentage of full time grandparent caregivers.

Twenty states also have shared their plans for National Family Caregivers Month. State activities include proclamations by state governors, media outreach, trainings, conferences, and distribution of caregiver information. In Colorado, the Boulder County Aging Services Division and local senior services organizations will host a "Caregiver Wellness Day" for family caregivers. This activity is one among many examples of the ways communities are celebrating National Family Caregivers Month to raise awareness about the needs of caregivers and the availability of caregiver support services. For more information about state activities go to: (will insert AoA Web link here for a summary of Caregiver Month activities).

Additionally, President George W. Bush signed a proclamation for National Family Caregivers Month and it can be found at

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031031-7.html>.

### **Find out What's New on the AoA Web Site**

AoA is continuously updating our Web site to provide you with new information on the topic of aging. For example, the AoA Web site contains a regularly updated Calendar of Events to help you identify upcoming conferences and meetings of interest. To access the Calendar of Events go to: <http://www.aoa.gov/press/events/events.asp>. Stay abreast of new additions to our Web site by subscribing to the AoA *What's New* e-newsletter.

Subscribers receive updates to the Web site on a monthly basis. To subscribe visit:  
<http://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=aoaweb-l&A=1>.

### **America's Oldest Worker Receives 2003 Prime Time Award**

AoA and Experience Works announced the winner of the annual search for America's oldest worker - a 102-year-old real estate developer – at a press conference sponsored by Experience Works on September 30 in Washington, D.C. Prior to his current career venture the Prime Time Award honoree, Russell B. Clark, was a practicing physician and surgeon until the age of 83. Assistant Secretary for Aging, Josefina G. Carbonell and Andrea Wooten, President and CEO of Experience Works spoke at the press conference. Mr. Clark was presented the 2003 Prime Time Award at a luncheon in his honor. AoA has been a co-sponsor of the Prime Time Awards Program since its inception in 1998. The program recognizes America's Oldest Worker and top employers of older workers. It is the only national program that honors the contribution of working seniors. Experience Works is a national, nonprofit organization that provides training and employment services for mature workers. For more information go to:  
<http://www.experienceworks.org/primetime/Primetime2003/news.html>.

### **Policy and Program Updates**

#### **HHS Provides \$844 Million to States to Help Low-Income Households with Energy Costs**

On October 21, HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced the release of \$844 million to states to help low-income citizens with their heating bills during October, November, and December of this year. These funds represent grants to states, tribes and territories under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). For more information visit [http://www.aoa.gov/press/pr/2003/10\\_Oct/aoa\\_10\\_21\\_03.asp](http://www.aoa.gov/press/pr/2003/10_Oct/aoa_10_21_03.asp).

#### **New NIH Web Site Features Easy Access for Older Adults, Visually Impaired**

On October 23, the National Institutes of Health launched NIHSeniorHealth.gov, a major new Web site with formats and topics tailored to the needs of older people. The senior friendly site takes advantage of techniques developed by the National Institute on Aging and the National Library of Medicine designed to encourage older people to use the Internet. This site is a resource for the best information on health and medical research. NIH Senior Health is expected to serve as a model for web designers seeking to make sites accessible for older adults. The NIA and NLM have developed a booklet, *Making Your Web Site Senior Friendly*, which gives guidelines that can be used to update any web site with cognitive aspects of aging in mind. The NIA leads the Federal effort supporting and conducting research on aging and the health and well-being of older people. Both are part of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For a copy of *Making Your Web Site*

*Senior Friendly* go to:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/staffpubs/od/ocpl/agingchecklist.html>

For more information visit <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/>.

### **EPA Air Quality Index Now Year-Round in 100+ Cities**

Beginning October 1, the Environmental Protection Agency made new information on air quality available year-round in more than 100 U.S. cities. As part of an ongoing effort to protect the American public from air pollution, the Environmental Protection Agency, together with state and local governments, has expanded air quality forecasts to include daily information on particle pollution. The EPA expects this number of cities to grow in the coming months. The Air Quality Index is a color-coded system designed to inform the public about daily air pollution levels in their communities. During the summer months, local broadcast meteorologists in nearly 300 U.S. cities use the AQI to provide daily ozone forecasts as part of their weather forecasts. Unlike ozone pollution, known to be highest during the summer months, particle pollution can vary throughout the year. High levels of particle pollution can affect the health of nearly every American, however certain groups, including people with heart or lung disease; older adults; and children, can also be at risk at lower levels. Particle pollution has been linked to health problems including asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, changes in heart rate, arrhythmias and heart attacks. Air quality forecasts are available on local television stations, on state and local air quality agency web sites, on USA Today's weather page, and on The Weather Channel. Forecasts, health information, and maps showing real-time particle levels also are available on EPA's AIRNow web site, at [www.epa.gov/airnow](http://www.epa.gov/airnow).

### **If It Seems Too Good To Be True**

The HHS Office of Inspector General, Office of Public Affairs, has developed a background paper for use by our Senior Medicare Patrol grantees and volunteers on the subject of wheelchair/scooter fraud. AoA is collaborating with the OIG to help increase the awareness of seniors and their caregivers about this very important and growing area of consumer fraud. Medicare payments for power wheelchairs and scooters cost \$299 million in 1999. By 2003, that total mushroomed to over \$1 billion, tripling in four years. Some of this large increase means new hope for people previously unable to get around. Some is clearly fraud. Not only can such scams rob patients of vital mobility and cost taxpayers millions of dollars, they also ensnare unsuspecting seniors in a web of deceit and crime. What is the government doing? The Office of Inspector General is conducting investigations around the country and crooked dealers are being fined and going to jail. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is changing rules to keep some questionable dealers out of Medicare and is improving the medical approval process. For more information about how consumers can protect themselves go to:

<http://www.aoa.gov/smp/media/Consumer%20Wheel%20Chair%20Fraud.pdf>.

### **Making A Difference**

#### **Ombudsmen Make a Difference in Georgia**

The following case from Georgia's long-term care ombudsman report demonstrates how ombudsmen assist individuals living in long-term care facilities. A hospital social worker in metropolitan Atlanta contacted the ombudsman to report that Ms. L had been allegedly abused in a personal care home. The ombudsman visited Ms. L in the hospital. She claimed that she had been physically and verbally abused and punished by her home provider. The provider had failed to follow doctor's orders for a pureed diet. As a result, Ms. L was suffering from abdominal bleeding. Ms. L told the ombudsman she was afraid to return to the home. The ombudsman contacted law enforcement and regulators, who immediately began investigating the provider. The ombudsman retrieved the resident's possessions and funds from the home and assisted the hospital social worker to find Ms. L another personal care home. Today Ms. L is pleased with her new home. She tells the ombudsman she finally feels safe and protected.

### **Grantee Spotlight**

#### **The Innovative San Diego County Single Entry Point System**

The Aging and Independence Services, County of San Diego has created an innovative single entry point system that offers services and opportunities to older and disabled county residents. This program provides a “no wrong door” approach to accessing community-based services. The gateway to the system is a county wide toll-free phone number. Their call center is modeled after business sector operations that use centralized intake workers who channel callers to options based on their anticipated needs and eligibility for programs. After the intake worker identifies the most appropriate option, they use the call center’s electronic management tool to refer the case to another social worker associated with one of their programs. The call center merges information and referral, intake and case management, and elder abuse reporting functions to provide a single entry point for all long term care and elder services in the county. Using this system, the agency can address any of the different needs that would put older adults at risk for remaining safely in the community. The AIS also creates opportunities for older adults by fostering physical activity and mental stimulation, broadening social interaction, and encouraging self-reliance. For more information visit: <http://www2.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa/ServiceDetails.asp?ServiceID=404>.

#### **The Pharmacist as Educator for Medication Usage in Older Patients and their Caregivers**

The Puerto Rico Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs has implemented a noteworthy medication management program using funds provided by AoA. This State Unit on Aging collaborates with the School of Pharmacy, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Puerto Rico and the Pharmacy Association of Puerto Rico in conducting the SIMPLE Program. In Spanish the program’s title, Sepa la Informacion Correcta de sus Medicinas: Pregunte, Lea la Etiqueta y Evite problemas, means to know the correct information about medicines, ask, read the label, and avoid problems. Through the program, the Puerto Rico Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs seeks to improve the



quality, accessibility, availability, and acceptance of pharmaceutical services for the appropriate use of medications in the elderly population and their caregivers in Puerto Rico. They promote adherence to therapy dose, frequency, duration, and route of administration, storage, answer questions, and attend to patient's needs. The program targets local community pharmacists who must satisfactorily complete the training sessions. The pharmacists must have adequate space in their pharmacies to allow for interaction with patients; agree to recruit 15 patients to participate in the program; and offer up to one year of follow-up. This program demonstrates an innovative approach by a State Unit on Aging in the areas of health promotion/ disease prevention. The State Unit on Aging in Puerto Rico deserves our congratulations as a model program and a job well done. For more information on this program please feel free to contact Ms. Rossana Lopez Leon, Executive Director at (787) 721-6121.

### [Of Interest](#)

#### **Funding Alert**

The Brookdale Foundation Group will fund up to fifteen local agencies through the Relatives as Parents Program Local Seed Grant Initiative. This initiative is designed to encourage the expansion of services for grandparents and other relatives who have taken responsibility of parenting when biological parents are unwilling or unable to provide this care. The deadline for submission of local proposals is Thursday, January 15, 2004. To download copies of local Request For Proposal guidelines and application form go to: [www.brookdalefoundation.org](http://www.brookdalefoundation.org).

#### **Three New Policy Briefs Examine Critical Caregiving Issues and Trends**

International caregiving policies, caregiving and depression, and family medical leave are the focus of three new reports from the Family Caregiver Alliance. *The Road to Recognition: International Review of Public Policies to Support Family and Informal Caregiving* discusses key policy issues and practices of family caregiver support in six countries, and illustrates where formal and informal systems of long-term care and caregiving intersect and where gaps and limitations remain. A detailed table compares policies in the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. *Caregiver Depression, A Growing Mental Health Concern* addresses the economic and health consequences of depression among family caregivers, discusses barriers to treatment and promising practices to alleviating symptoms, and suggests policies to support family caregivers. *Paid Family and Medical Leave: Why We Need It, How We Can Get It* describes how paid family and medical leave affects working caregivers and their employers, reviews the status of paid family leave legislation throughout the U.S., and makes recommendations for policies benefiting both working families and employers. The policy briefs are funded by the Archstone Foundation, a private grant making organization whose mission is to contribute toward the preparation of society in meeting the needs of an aging population. Founded in 1977, Family Caregiver Alliance operates programs at the national, state, and local levels to sustain and

support the important work of families providing care to loved ones affected by chronic, disabling health conditions. These policy briefs are available at [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org).

### **Celebrating the First National Aging in Place Week November 9-15**

The National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association will launch the first National Aging in Place Week November 9-15. Its purpose is to bring attention to the role that home modification plays in independent living for older persons by making homes safer, more comfortable, and supportive. It is intended to educate older persons and their relatives, concerned professionals, and policy makers about home modification measures that promote aging in place. The week has been initiated by the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association with the assistance of an Advisory Council including the National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification, the Center for Universal Design at the North Carolina State University, and the IDEA Center of the State University of New York at Buffalo. For more information go to: <http://www.reversemortgage.org/seniorsafehome.htm>.

### **Over-The-Counter Medicines Now Reimbursable Through Flexible Spending Accounts**

The Internal Revenue Service announced in September that over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are now reimbursable through employer-sponsored healthcare flexible spending accounts. Such accounts allow participating employees to pay for medical care not covered by insurance with pre-tax money. For more information visit [http://www.chpainfo.org/ConsumerPages/Consumer\\_Pages\\_IRS\\_Flexible\\_Spending.asp](http://www.chpainfo.org/ConsumerPages/Consumer_Pages_IRS_Flexible_Spending.asp).

### **What Do You Know about Portion Distortion**

Anyone eating on the run or at restaurants has probably noticed that food portions have gotten larger. Some portions are called "super size," while others have simply grown in size and provide enough food for at least two people. With this growth have come increases in waistlines and body weight. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute invites you to take a short quiz to see if you know how today's portions compare to the portions available 20 years ago. To take the quiz go to <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/>.

### **[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](mailto:aoainfo@aoa.gov); or visit us on the Web at [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov).

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