

The Ant & Grasshopper: A Tale of Prevention

A Legal Brief by Bill Graham

One summer's day Greta Grasshopper decided to call her friend Leona Ant and invite her to lunch.

"I can't have lunch with you this week," said Leona Ant. "I have to get my affairs in order."

"What affairs?" asked Greta Grasshopper. Leona showed her the list:

1. Durable power of attorney
2. Health care proxy
3. Open joint accounts for easy access to my money
4. General estate planning
5. Get credit reports from
www.annualcreditreport.com

"Why bother about all that now?" Greta asked.

"Come and chat with me instead."

"I am trying to prevent a problem before it happens," said Leona Ant. "You should do the same."

"Pish! Posh!" said Greta Grasshopper. "There is plenty of time to take care of those things."

Leona Ant went on her way. Greta Grasshopper went shopping for shoes with her new friend, Connie Centipede. Greta sometimes thought about what Leona had said but always convinced herself there was plenty of time. Until...

Greta got a notice that she had over extended her credit. Someone had used her card number to buy hundreds of pairs of shoes. Greta became so stressed about how to straighten it all out that she suffered a catastrophic illness. Her family became overwhelmed trying to take of her and keep her affairs in order.

Decisions on health care had to be made but no one knew Greta's wishes about treatment. Bills kept coming in and Greta was not able to pay herself. Her children were not listed as joint owners and none of them had a durable power of attorney, so none had access to her money to pay on her behalf.

Greta was not able to get into the nursing home of her choice due to her poor credit history and her family's lack of access to her money.

Leona Ant would come to visit Greta Grasshopper. Greta could see how at ease Leona felt, and could hear the Ant family talk about how lucky it was that Leona had planned ahead. Too late Greta realized the truth.

Planning was the key to prevention.

Senior Health Check Up...

(from page 5)

In the coming months, NYSOFA will periodically provide informational resources and updates to the Area Agency on Aging network and New York State citizenry through our web-sites and through other publications like this one.

Area Agencies Dance...

(from page 4)

across the State.

One popular example is Oswego County's Swing Dance Night Club which re-creates the USO dances of the 1940s. Two to three hundred seniors dance to a seventeen piece band, and younger volunteers in cigarette girl costumes bring authenticity and an intergenerational aspect to the program. It brings back good memories and encourages physical exercise.

An interesting nutrition-related initiative is Onondaga County's cooking classes, including "Men Can Cook," "Cooking with Diabetics," and the upcoming "Salud," a class for Latina women. The classes allow seniors and caregivers to have fun with healthy cooking and provide them a time for socializing and learning.

In a recent survey of AAAs in New York State, over 78% of respondents said the local AAA and/or its subcontractors offer at least one physical activity and nutrition-related wellness program and 81% of respondents said participant interest is their greatest asset in running their programs. The interest of older adults has been a strong influence on the exciting programs run here and their continued success.

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SPECIAL EDITION

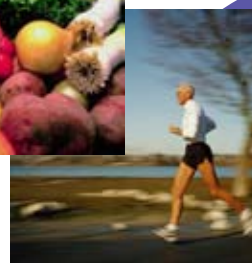
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NYSOFA News



February 2008
Vol.2, Is.2

A newsletter for everyone who cares about older persons

HEALTHY LIVING!



It's all about
YOU!



Staying healthy longer is more important now than ever before, and its importance is only going to increase as people live longer and the costs of health care increase.

But first, let's talk about you. Because this is *ALL* about *YOU!*

There is a good chance that you are going to live longer than your grandparents and possibly even your parents. Now more than ever, we know how the human body functions and how important it is to take care of it.

Scanning and diagnostic equipment is advancing rapidly, enabling physicians and other professionals to identify problems earlier. And, as you know, early detection leads to more effective treatment.

Okay, now that you know that you're going to live longer, you have to decide how you want to spend those extra years. For example, do you want to be out and about, and independent? Do you want to join your friends in enjoyable leisure time activities, ready to go whenever they are? Do you want to travel, or just hop in the car and go shop or visit with a friend?

What you do now will affect what you can do later in life. Taking care of your health, your body and

even your state of mind will have a long-lasting effect on your capability and your opportunity to enjoy life.

What if you have already reached your older years and are feeling the effects of leading a full life or possibly a chronic illness? Is it still worth taking care of yourself and making adjustments to your lifestyle? Absolutely. Life is for living and enjoying, and the better your physical and mental conditions are, the more you can enjoy yours.

This special edition of the *NYSOFA News* is dedicated to improving your physical and mental health. We want to show you how, by taking a little time and making a little effort, you can save valuable time and money by using the health care system less than you are now. You may also be interested to know that, in doing so, you are personally helping to defray our country's enormous - and mounting - demands on that system and the resulting costs.

Everyone has much to live for - whether it is watching grandchildren grow up, sharing laughs with friends or simply "kicking back" and enjoying the many facets of nature. Consider the many blessings that we all have, and then use them to inspire you to take good care of yourself!

Director's Corner

Director Michael J. Burgess



This month's issue of *NYSOFA NEWS* is the second "special issue" published since I introduced our monthly newsletter less than a year ago. We do plan to publish these longer, special issues from time to time during the year and I hope you find them useful.



Prevention was selected as a focus for this issue because of how important prevention and preventive care and programs are to the aging population. Great improvements in medicine, public health, science, and technology have enabled today's older Americans to live longer and healthier lives than previous generations. Older adults want to remain healthy and independent at home in their communities.

We know that the science of aging indicates that chronic disease and disability are not inevitable. Because of this, health promotion and disease prevention activities and programs are increasingly important for older adults, their families, and the health care system.

Unfortunately, many Americans fail to make the connection between undertaking healthy behaviors today and the impact of these choices later in life. Studies indicate that healthy eating, physical activity, mental stimulation, not smoking, active social engagement, moderate use of alcohol, maintaining a safe environment, social support, and regular health care are important in maintaining health and independence.

The network of area agencies on aging in New York plays an important role in helping older residents maintain a healthy lifestyle. You'll read in this issue about a number of programs and initiatives that are making a positive difference in the lives of participants. Maybe you'll find an interest to participate in one of these programs in your community, or perhaps you'll get one started.

What Is 'Chronic Disease' And Is It Preventable?

What is a chronic disease or condition?

A chronic disease is one lasting 3 months or longer. Vaccines or medications do not make them disappear. The leading chronic diseases include: arthritis, cardiovascular disease such as heart attacks and strokes, cancer, diabetes, oral health problems and obesity. They are more common as you get older – more than 85 percent of people over age 65 have at least one such disease.

Why are chronic diseases a problem?

Chronic diseases accounted for 5 of 6 leading causes of death in 2002 in the United States. According to one study, 75 percent of what is spent on health care is associated with patients that have one or more chronic conditions. Most of the reported growth in costs is due to obesity. Prolonged illness and disability associated with many chronic diseases also decreases the quality of life for countless numbers of people including older adults.

Are you at risk?

If you use tobacco, are physically inactive and don't eat well your risk for chronic disease is very high. 70 percent of the leading causes of chronic disease and death are lifestyle-linked: tobacco, alcohol, inactivity, diet, and stress – factors you can control! In New York State, 40% of people over age 65 have limitation due to arthritis; 23 % have cardiovascular disease; 19% have diabetes; 62% are overweight or obese; and, 35% get no physical activity.

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Albany, NY 12223-1251
1-800-342-9871

Our sole purpose is to improve communications between all components of the aging network within New York State and to work toward improving the lives of older persons everywhere. Feel free to copy and distribute this publication.

Eliot Spitzer
Governor

Michael J. Burgess
Director

NORCs Address More Than Just Residential Issues

The thirty-seven "naturally occurring retirement communities" or NORCs projects currently funded by the New York State Office for the Aging have a story to tell. It's a story about communities coming together to work with and on behalf of the elderly individuals who live there. It's also a story about specific initiatives that focus on preventing flu, pneumonia, falls and other health risks as a way to keep seniors well and living in their own homes.

What is a NORC? NORCs are communities and neighborhoods that have unusually high concentrations of older individuals. These aren't exclusive communities designed for seniors--rather NORCs are "mixed" communities with housing available to individuals of all ages which, for many reasons, have a significant number of older residents.

What is a NORCs Service Project? The NORCs projects funded by NYSOFA (the New York City Department for the Aging has also launched a NORCs initiative in 54 housing complexes and neighborhood with high concentrations of seniors) foster connections within the community to create a supportive environment for seniors. The projects typically call on local businesses, community organizations, health care providers and seniors to create and coordinate an array of health, human service and housing services that make it possible for older adults to stay well and stay in their own homes.

The NORCs Prevention Story Answering questions such as "do NORCs projects work?" and "how effective are the efforts to tailor needed services to specific communities and help seniors manage an array of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes?" is the goal of the Health Indicators Study undertaken by the United Hospital Fund (UHF).

The study began with pilot testing in 12 NORCs projects with more than 2000 seniors and the results reveal NORCs have been innovative and creative in meeting local needs.

Equally important, in these twelve pilot communities, the study identified areas in which additional preventive work will be beneficial. In particular, the study drew attention to the fact that more than one in four seniors living in NORCs communities experienced a fall in the past year. This

finding has led the twelve programs to respond with the development of falls prevention initiatives and, as Fredda Vladeck, Director of the UHF's Aging in Place Initiative states, "not just respond to individuals' needs one hip fracture at a time."

Expect to here more about NORCs and the expansion of preventive services in these communities in the months to come. Tailoring proven services—including a wide variety of preventive health services—to specific community needs promotes wellness for mature New Yorkers and that's a story worthy of headlines!

Calendar OF EVENTS

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa

March 6 – Albany

NYS Family Caregiver Council

March 11 - Albany

NY Connects Long Term Care Advisory Council

May 6 - Albany

Senior Citizens Day

May 7 - Albany

Joint meeting of the Governor's Advisory Committee and the Aging Services Advisory Committee

March 19 - Manhattan

Community Meeting on Culture Change in the Nursing Home Environment

Want to join us?

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For the paper version, fill out the form below and send it to: **New York State Office for the Aging Agency Building #2, Empire State Plaza Albany, NY 12223-1251**

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Albany Group Tackles Chronic Disease Head-On



Ron Scott (left) led a class in Healthy Living at the Neighborhood Community Center in Albany's West Hill section this week. Mr. Scott, a Peer Leader for Healthy Choices NY, held the attention of everyone in the group, which calls itself "Kindred Spirits Fellowship" and is sponsored by the United Methodist Society.

by Erin Purcell

Aging Services Representative, NYSOFA

At the Neighborhood Community Center in Albany's West Hill, AmeriCorp worker Marie Coleman has assembled eleven older New Yorkers to participate in a weekly class on Healthy Living. The participants range in age from 60 to 84 years and all struggle with chronic diseases that affect their lifestyles; diabetes, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiac conditions and other ongoing health problems and issues.

The six week classes are part of the Chronic Disease Self Management Program, Healthy Choices New York, funded by the Administration on Aging and NYSOFA. The Albany County Department of the Aging sponsors this local program in partnership with SUNYA's School of Social Welfare, Center for Excellence in Aging Services. The program is evidence-based for successful implementation with older adults with chronic diseases.

Project Coordinator Karen Revitt and Peer Leader Ron Scott are instructors for the West Hill classes and are both diabetics. They encourage the participants to use the "self management tool box" to select from a list of choices or "tools" to improve the quality of

their life while living with a chronic disease. The tools include physical activity, better breathing, healthy eating, understanding emotions, working with health professionals and managing fatigue.

An action plan is developed each week that includes an activity that the individual really wants to accomplish and has a high level of confidence that he or she can achieve it. Participants need to try and stay with the activity for two weeks to see if it works for them. They report their results at each meeting. Materials are supplied to each participant that includes a cassette or CD for relaxation breathing, a book of simple exercises and a book that covers healthy approaches to living with chronic diseases.

Peer Leader Ron Scott enthusiastically shares success stories from the classes that he and Karen have instructed including the positive effect on himself. He suffers from neuropathy related to his diabetes and by setting his own goals; he has been able to walk twice as far without pain and has quit smoking after 52 years. "Karen really cares about what she is doing. Add that to her knowledge, we have a lot of fun in helping people."

Marie Coleman explained that the classes are quite popular and many seniors are seeing results. The classes are held on Tuesdays and are hosted by the United Methodist Society.

The seniors also meet on Thursdays and Fridays and have agreed to call themselves "Kindred Spirits Fellowship." They share opportunities for dance groups, swimming pool time, walking trails, choirs and help each other with rides to and from class.

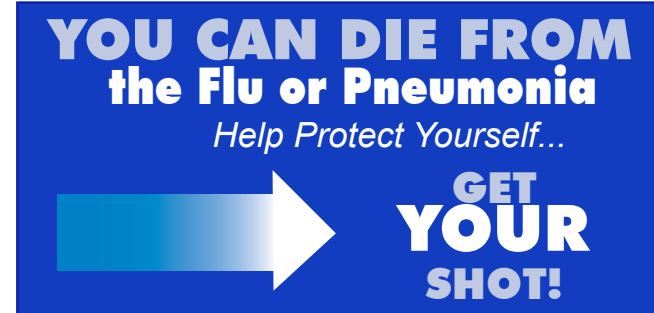


"You certainly have MY attention!" Participants in the Chronic Disease Self Management Program are learning new ways to deal with their illnesses.

Aging & You

NYSOFA's latest Aging & You television program will be released to cable stations March 1st: "Healthy Aging: How to Avoid Chronic Disease."

For broadcast times, call your cable company and ask to speak to the Access Coordinator. To receive this program, call NYSOFA's Public Information Officer Reza Mizbani at 518-474-7181.



Chronic disease prevention...
(from page 2)

What can you do to reduce the risk or severity of chronic disease?

Much of the chronic disease burden is preventable and much of the cost is avoidable. Improving your lifestyle helps prevent or delay certain diseases. Start by looking at your personal behaviors and habits. Talk with your doctor before making any changes. If you use tobacco, find programs and services to help you stop. Limit your intake of alcohol. Increase your daily physical activity. Walk more -- walking is one of the best ways to improve your health.

Good nutrition influences the progress of many diseases and can shorten the length of hospital stays. Look at the type and amount of food you eat every day -- reduce fats, sugar and salt, increase fruits, vegetable and whole grains (2005 Dietary Guidelines). And, reduce the size of the portions you eat. Don't eat big meals just before going to sleep.

Make sure vaccinations are current and get annual flu shots and a pneumonia shot. Use preventive screening services through Medicare and other health insurance coverage you have. If you're not feeling well, don't wait to see the doctor; early detection means early treatment.

Area Agencies Surveyed on Health Promotion

by Kate Bliss, Student Intern

School of Social Welfare, SUNY Albany

A survey of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) about health promotion programs has been completed and the results are in! What we found was a wide variety of innovative and strong programs that are being offered throughout the State.

Thirty-two of the fifty-nine Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) completed this survey, which revealed that bone strengthening programs stood out as favorites among several counties. A full one-sixth of the counties that completed the survey named their bone building programs as their most innovative, effective and successful offering. In addition, 59% of responding AAAs said that they offer or sponsor an arthritis and osteoporosis program in their area.

Other counties' favorites include a gambit of health programs, including flu clinics, mental health services, mobile screenings, and nutrition workshops. Most counties said that their best offerings were group programs, as opposed to one-on-one or telephone programs.

Three-quarters of all respondents also offer a medication management program and over half offer health screenings. Nassau County used the State Office for the Aging's "Senior Health Check" as a placemat at their congregate meal sites. These placemats included a list of preventive services that are covered by Medicare, and how often beneficiaries may use the coverage. This was a very simple and effective way of informing seniors about their benefits.

Several AAAs have created partnerships with their local YMCA and Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVP) to offer a greater variety of programs. By using community partners, responding to input from seniors, and planning with creativity and innovation, New York State continues to offer a wide array of successful programs for its elderly.

Need help getting services or information?

Call the NYSOFA Help Line

1-800-342-9871

'Healthy Choices New York' Encourages Life Management

by Philip McCallion, Ph.D. & Lisa A Ferretti, LMSW
University at Albany School of Social Welfare

"Healthy Choices New York" is a statewide initiative to empower older adults by providing evidence-based health promotion programs in community-based settings.

Now in its second year, Healthy Choices New York has served hundreds of New Yorkers by implementing two evidence-based programs. The first, the "Living Healthy"* program, is six weekly 2 ½ hour workshops that empower participants to self-manage the ups and downs of living with a chronic condition like arthritis, heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes by teaching techniques such as action planning, problem solving and goal setting and by sharing information on topics such as medication management, how to talk to your doctor, physical activity, relaxation and healthy eating.

The second component program of Healthy Choices New York is the "Active Choices"*** Program. This is a telephone support program to help participants increase their physical activity through the support of a personal telephone coach. The "Activity Coach" works with participants to set physical activity goals, problem solve when things do not go as planned and provide information on a variety of helpful topics to increase participant success!

Currently participating in the project are Broome County, the Capital Region (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties), and New York City; however, plans are underway to investigate broader dissemination of these programs throughout the state.

Participating Area Agencies on Aging have been very successful in extending the reach of evidence-based health programming through community partnerships. Successful partnerships to date include local Departments of Health, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), community service providers, insurers, and faith based communities.

The initiative is funded through the federal Administration on Aging, the New York State Office for the Aging and the New York State Department of Health. For more information about the project,

please visit the project website at: www.albany.edu/aging/healthychoices.

* "Living Healthy" is the local implementation of the Chronic Disease Self Management Program developed by Stanford Patient Education Research Center. For more information please go to: <http://patienteducation.stanford.edu/programs/cdcmp.html>

***"Active Choices" was developed by the Stanford Prevention Research Center. For more information please go to: http://www.activeforlife.info/key_partners/stanford.html

Area Agencies Dance to the Beat of Healthy Living



Oswego County's Swing Dance Night Club which recreates the USO dances of the 1940s. Two to three hundred seniors dance to a seventeen piece band.

by Kate Bliss, Student Intern

School of Social Welfare, SUNY Albany

If healthy living is high on your list of things to do in 2008, you have plenty of company. The State Office for the Aging and local area agencies on aging (AAAs) share your commitment to healthy living and are increasingly featuring wellness and disease prevention activities. Evidence based programs, or programs that are proven effective because outcomes are consistently good, are now favored in half of the counties in New York. Still, it is New York's variety of traditional and non-traditional programs that make us stand out.

Some of New York's health promotion and disease prevention programs for mature adults focus on physical fitness while others focus on education. Everything from line dancing to nature walks to home safety assessments are being offered at various sites

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Senior Health Check-Up Program

It gives "Check Up" a whole new meaning!

Staying healthy is key to independence and enjoying the later years of life. Of course this is sometimes easier said than done. As we get older, we are at increased risk of having chronic diseases in part because of unhealthy lifestyles. These can include tobacco use, excessive alcohol use, poor eating habits and lack of physical activity. How you live now can affect what might happen later or worsen existing chronic disease.

You can get recommended health screenings based on your age (age 50 for colorectal screenings), your gender (prostate screening for males) and risk factors (tobacco use, overweight). Everyone who is eligible for Medicare receives an annual publication "Medicare and You" which describes benefits, eligibility and co-payments. It's a good document to get started and find out what you have been missing.

The Senior Health Check-Up Program is an initiative developed by NYSOFA. It promotes better health and prevention to reduce chronic disease among older persons. This initiative will help the state improve the quality of health for thousands of older New Yorkers and reduce unnecessary health care costs. Its goals are to raise awareness of available benefits, encourage and increase the use of preventive health screening and testing benefits, expand and increase the use of evi-

dence-based chronic disease management and health promotion programs and eventually decrease morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) associated with preventable chronic diseases. Medicare's preventive benefits include flu and pneumonia vaccinations, smoking-cessation, mammography, pap-tests, pelvic exams, prostate, colorectal cancer screening, diabetes screening, including diabetes self-management training, cardiovascular disease screening, glaucoma screening, bone mass measurement, and the "Welcome to Medicare Exam" or initial one-time physical exam.

With the help and work of our Area Agencies on Aging, other partners such as the NYS Health Department and American Cancer Society, we hope to increase the use of these tests by five to ten percent annually during the coming years, and exceed the national average for the use of these benefits.

Senior Health Check-Up can improve the quality of life for New York State's 2.4 million elderly Medicare beneficiaries and decrease unnecessary hospital, emergency room, and nursing home costs. We can use it to do this one community, one underserved area, or one individual at a time!

(continued on page 8)

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