

## Budget preserves core aging services

The State of New York is facing its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The Governor has been petitioning the federal government for more aid, and was successful in receiving additional funds for the home heating assistance program. These funds are already being distributed to households in need throughout the state. Additionally, Governor Paterson is asking Congress and President-elect Obama to provide economic bailout funds to the state to offset the loss of revenues due to economic crisis on Wall Street. The Governor has been urging state legislative action to reduce the deficit and has jump started the next fiscal year's budget negotiations by submitting his proposed budget more than a month before its due date. The Executive Budget recommends many difficult actions needed to close a four year budget gap of \$51 billion and makes every effort to maintain funding for core programs which provide important services to the elderly.

With the support of the Governor, the NYS Office for the Aging has been able to carefully reduce our proposed budget appropriations without negatively impacting core services which enable older persons to remain living independently in the community as long as possible. Under the proposed 2009-10 budget, there will be no major reductions from the final 2008-2009 budget in base funding for Community Services



*On December 16, Governor Paterson announced that New York faces a record \$47 billion budget deficit over the next four years. The Governor delivered a budget that confronts the financial crisis head-on.*

for the Elderly (CSE), Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and Neighborhood NORCs, Social Adult Day Care, and Health Insurance Information and Counseling Assistance Program. There were no reductions from the final 2008-09 budget base funding for Caregiver Resource Centers, Caregiver Centers for Excellence, Foster Grandparents, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and the Community Empowerment Initiative.

Consistent with the approach recommended for all human service programs, the Budget reduces the COLA for EISEP, CSE and SNAP in 2008-09 by 1.0 percent (to 2.2 percent) and eliminates it for 2009-

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Help is out there:

# Lower your home heating bill!

Much attention this year has focused on high energy prices. Thinking ahead to the cold winter months, Governor Paterson called together a team of agencies during his first summer in office to coordinate efforts to increase heating benefits and reduce energy use. Successful lobbying of the federal government by the Governor resulted in increased Home Energy Assistance Program Grants. State agencies continued to work together to provide public service announcements and a series of statewide workshops to provide consumers with easy, do-it yourself tips to lower heating bills, as well as information about New York's heating-related programs.

In addition to the information found on the state's special web site ([www.HeatSmartNY.org](http://www.HeatSmartNY.org)), New Yorkers can now request a new publication from the NYS Office for the Aging "Saving Energy at Home: 101 Tips." This booklet provides simple ideas for reducing your home energy use, tips for purchasing new appliances and a list of available resources.

Keeping warm and cutting back on heating expenses is easier than you think. A home energy audit is a good first step to assess how much energy your home consumes and to evaluate what measures you can take to make your home more energy efficient. An audit will show you problems that may, when corrected, save you significant amounts of money over time.

During an audit you can pinpoint where your house is losing energy. An audit will determine the efficiency of your home's heating and cooling systems and show you ways to conserve hot water and electricity. An energy audit can be free to qualified individuals.

Contact your local Office for the Aging for details. To get their phone number or to request a copy of *Saving Energy at Home: 101 Tips* call 1-800-342-9871.



*The Saving Energy At Home: 101 Tips guide is now available by contacting the New York State Office for the Aging at 1-800-342-9871*

## Calendar of Events

January 30 - Westchester County Dept. of Senior Programs and Services annual legislative breakfast meeting

March 12 - Family Caregiver Council

May 6 - Senior Citizen's Day

## Director's Corner

Director Michael J. Burgess



We have come to the end of a tumultuous year in state government which included the transition to a new governor and the worst budgetary crisis in our lifetime. As we go forward into 2009 we must maintain our mission to promote the home and community based services which allow older New Yorkers the opportunity to live independently in the community with economic security. Certainly, this is a much more difficult mission now due to the overall national and global economic conditions which have harmed the retirement savings of so many older persons as well as state and local budgets.

Faced with the need to make substantial cuts in state spending for next year's budget, NYSOFA worked with Governor Paterson and his staff to develop a budget that still maintains our core services. We worked to preserve the infrastructure of the aging network in our state and I believe we have done that,

though some of the cuts are difficult and we wish the economic times were better so that we would not have had to propose them.

I have never liked looking at life solely through the lens of a state budget. State policies and budgets are important but it is the delivery of services in the community and the networking of families, friends, caregivers and community organizations which make life better for people. A good example of that occurred recently in the Capital District and the eastern part of the state during the December ice storm. No amount of government money could have taken care of people in need. It was the hard work and compassion of volunteers and staff at our area agencies and other community organizations and housing projects that made sure that the vulnerable older population as well as the disabled were contacted to ensure they were not in life threatening situations and could be moved to a shelter for warmth.

I have said over and over again that we in state government don't provide the services. They are provided at the local level by dedicated staff persons and volunteers. Here in Albany we will continue to do our part, providing the support, funding, training and leadership to help empower communities to continue to better serve older New Yorkers. I am proud to be involved in that mission and to have so many of you as partners.

*Michael J. Burgess*

## The bright pink form you need to know about

Many individuals who are interested in advance health care planning--and that should be just about everybody--are familiar with the Health Care Proxy and the Living Will. Relatively few were aware of another document called Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST).

Until recently.

On July 7, 2008, Governor David A. Paterson signed Chapter 197 of the Laws of 2008, amending New York Public Health Law, § 2977 which allowed the MOLST form to be used statewide in lieu of the NYS Non-Hospital Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) form. Prior to that date, MOLST was legally approved for use in hospitals and nursing homes across New York State.

A pilot program allowed its use as a Non-Hospital DNR only in Monroe and Onondaga counties.

What is the difference between a Health Care Proxy or a Living Will and the MOLST?

The foremost difference is that it is a medical order. A Health Care Proxy and a Living Will are documents created by patients to cover a gamut of possible medical treatments. Their effectiveness in non-medical settings is extremely limited. Emergency medical services were allowed only to follow a DNR which was limited to situations involving cardiac or respiratory arrest.

The MOLST form is also completed by a patient but it is

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# Something new to chew on in Washington County

## Innovative senior dining program

By Claire Murphy

*Director, Washington County Office for the Aging*

Faced with declining congregate meal program participation and escalating costs the Area Agency in Washington County looked for unique ways to maintain access and provide a service that county residents would use. The average age of congregate program customers was 78 years old, and efforts by nutrition staff were not successful in engaging new seniors or boomers into the congregate program. Washington County is a rural county---traditional meal sites in one community were not accessed by people in other communities due to distance.

Discussions with seniors who used the program, as well as those that did not, revealed that traditional congregate dining was less attractive to seniors. Many of the boomers coming of age did not want to go to "my mother's meal site" or more specifically they did not want to go to the meal site with their mother. Residents of communities that did not have a traditional meal site would not travel to other communities to participate. In order to provide us with opportunities to reach these seniors with information we began looking at different ways to offer meals.

Based loosely on a model of restaurant dining in Vermont, this program allows county seniors to donate for tickets which can be redeemed at contracted restaurants for a complete meal – entrée, beverage and dessert. Restaurants agree to provide a nutritionally approved menu option for this program and are reimbursed at an agreed rate for each ticket that is redeemed at their establishment. Restaurants are also allowed to identify the times that tickets are accepted and meal availability. Copies of health department certificates and inspections are maintained and agency staff is available to support the restaurants with customer service and billing issues.

Consumers can request tickets good for 3 month periods by mail or in person. Customers are provided with an opportunity to make a voluntary donation for the tickets they request and are asked to register for the congregate



*Washington County seniors have many area restaurants to choose from. Above, a group of seniors enjoys lunch at Scottie's Coffee Shop in Granville. Hundreds of seniors in the county participate in this innovative program.*

dining program just as with traditional meal site participants. Not only is restaurant dining used by new clients but existing congregate and home delivered meal clients use the tickets to get meals on days they have appointments or other plans when they might otherwise miss a meal.

Clients who order tickets by mail are given printed information on a variety of subjects relative to seniors including nutrition, health and safety, volunteer opportunities and service availability. Clients are also asked to provide feed back regarding their satisfaction

Photos courtesy Matt Rice/Manchester Newspapers



*Washington County seniors have many area restaurants to choose from. Above, a group of seniors enjoys lunch at Scottie's Coffee Shop in Granville. Hundreds of seniors in the county participate in this innovative program.*

with specific dining experiences. Satisfaction reports completed by seniors are in turn shared with the restaurants as appropriate.

Within the first year of this program the number of participants registered for congregate dining jumped from 278 to 496 and the average age of customers dropped to 72. In general, satisfaction with this program is exceptionally high. While initially reluctant to loose the "community meal site", seniors now travel across the county to try different establishments, and many seniors are



*Scottie's owner Tom Scott accepts a voucher as part of the county program.*

## Participating restaurants:

West Village Market, Cambridge; Christ the King Spiritual Center, Greenwich; Manley's Restaurant, Hudson Falls; PJ's Cafe, Ft. Edward; Witches Kitchen, Greenwich; Sally's Hen House, Hudson Falls; AJ's Restaurant, Granville; Corner Diner, Hudson Falls; China Wok, Whitehall; Scottie's Coffee Shop, Granville; Latham's Diner, Hudson Falls; House of Pizza, Whitehall

*Find out more about the program online by visiting [www.co.washington.ny.us/](http://www.co.washington.ny.us/)*

using this service regularly. They are able to move around the county to different restaurants for a different experience, taking family and friends with them. As many as 16 businesses participate in this program throughout the county. Restaurant dining has come to stay in Washington County. This program provides positive evidence of the benefits of public/private partnership, not only as great customer service, but as

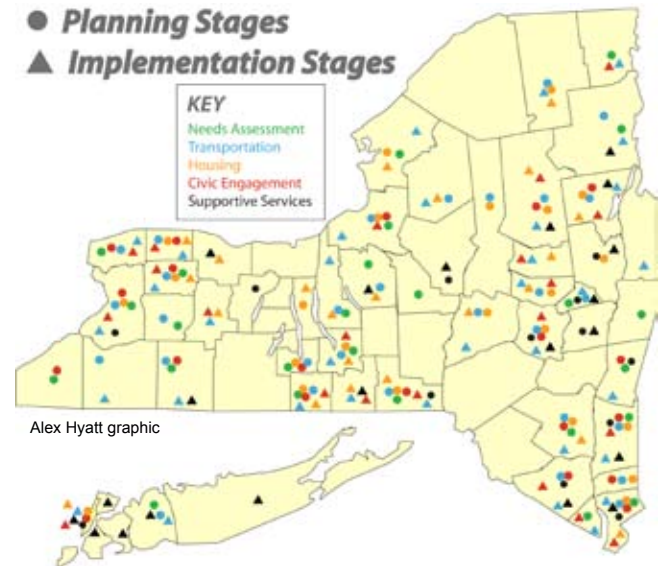
# Aging in Community: NYSOFA addresses changing populations

The New York State Office for the Aging is organizing community advocates, aging services providers, and area agencies for the aging (county offices for aging) to encourage local civic leaders to address the needs of the rapidly increasing older population.

Older New Yorkers want to remain in their homes and communities of choice but often cannot because their housing is no longer appropriate or their communities do not provide the supports necessary to do so. While there are many efforts to support housing, transportation, community-based health care services and a movement toward Livable Communities, the individual programs have not before been linked and identified as part of an overarching theme of services to support “aging in community.”

We have surveyed county office for aging to learn the degree to which their counties are involved in planning efforts and/or implementation activities to address the services needed by an aging population. Please note – our request for information about local actions was to describe the services beyond those that are traditionally and capably delivered by Area Agencies on Aging throughout the state.

We have learned that there are significant efforts being led by local organizations, municipalities, counties or groups of older New Yorkers. Many have shared with



us that they are already implementing efforts to support aging in community.

We have assembled this information on a state map, identifying efforts in each county. There is clearly a movement underway and we know there is more happening in communities than we have learned so far.

Please share with the NYS Office for Aging your knowledge about local efforts to support aging in community so that we can add this information to our mapping project by emailing [gail.myers@ofa.state.ny.us](mailto:gail.myers@ofa.state.ny.us) or calling 518-474-4395.

## Governor Paterson delivers his first state-of-the-state address

Governor Paterson presented his 1st State of the State Message January 7th in Albany to a packed Assembly Chamber. The Message highlighted the decisive and prudent action Governor Paterson is taking to get the state’s fiscal house in order while continuing to set forth meaningful reforms. The Governor outlined three pillars of his vision for a brighter New York: First, balance the budget. Second, strengthen the health care system, improve schools, create jobs, rebuild the infrastructure, clean the environment and begin clean energy revolution. Third, promote respect for one another.

Three initiatives in the State of the State carry special importance to the Aging Services community. Noting that in these difficult times community service is more important than ever, the Governor is supporting volunteerism with an expansion of the Regional Volunteer Centers across the state. The Governor is combating the growing obesity epidemic and will create a new revolving loan fund to increase the number of healthy food markets in under-served communities. Additionally, the Governor proposed increasing services for veterans who live in rural areas.

The entire transcript is available at: [http://www.ny.gov/governor/keydocs/speech\\_0107091.html](http://www.ny.gov/governor/keydocs/speech_0107091.html)

# Economic crunch: more seniors in poverty

More than half of New Yorkers who live between 100% and 200% poverty are facing hardship in terms of meeting their food, economic, housing or health needs. Many of these households depend on the basic welfare grant. The welfare grant in New York has not been raised in 18 years, despite the increase in the cost of food and supplies caused by inflation. The overall welfare grant is now less than 50% of the federal poverty level, \$291 a month for a family of three.

Unfortunately, downturns in the economy often hit segments of the population that can least afford any additional financial burden. Individuals and families struggling to make ends meet can be devastated by spikes in energy costs and increases in day to day necessities affected by higher energy prices. While there has been relief recently in prices at the gas pump, many costs that went up as a result of high fuel costs have not yet fallen to levels before the energy spike hit the global economy. This is especially the case with food prices that increased because of the related increases in transportation and production costs brought on by high oil prices.

Hunger in America is a problem that is still with us despite public and private efforts to help those in need. Food pantries across the state have found it harder and

harder to meet demands. Soup kitchens and meal programs have seen more and more individuals cross their thresholds as household budgets that were once stable reached breaking points.

In 2006 emergency food programs (EFPs) served 500,000 people in New York State and 300,000 people in New York City each week with food stamps, soup kitchens, and food pantries. Overall 2.1 million New Yorkers access food pantries each week. Over the past four years, emergency food programs in New York State have seen a 75% increase in clients; EFPs in New York City have seen a 65% increase. This year, Governor Paterson has proposed an increase in the basic welfare grant to take place over a three year period. The Governor has also included in his proposed budget a number of proposals that would help food banks and pantries across the state as they face increased demands. In these most difficult fiscal times for the state's economy, these initiatives underscore that the core mission of government- helping those most vulnerable and in need, will not be sacrificed if the Governor's budget is ultimately enacted.

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## Pink form

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reviewed by and with the patient's physician. The objective is to express the patient's treatment goals as medical orders that can be acted on without doubt or confusion. It is based on the patient's right to informed consent and to withhold consent. The order is signed by the physician and reviewed periodically.

The bright pink MOLST form is sent with the patient upon transfer or discharge.

The MOLST is recommended for people with serious or advancing chronic illness and those who want to further

define their care wishes by limiting medical interventions or clarifying a request for all medically indicated treatments including resuscitation and intubation. In this regard, it may seem like nothing more than a detailed DNR.

The message behind a DNR is often viewed as a negative one, however. It suggests to many an absence of treatment and care. The MOLST ensures that comfort care and palliative care, which are appropriate interventions for those with chronic illness or end stage illness, are provided.

For more information about MOLST, visit [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)

Visit NYSOFA's new web site at [www.aging.ny.gov](http://www.aging.ny.gov)

# Governor submits proposed budget early

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programs, a COLA is planned for 2010-11 and 2011-12, and an extension of the COLA for an additional year (2012-13) is recommended. Spending will be reduced for the Stony Brook Evaluation of Geriatric Home Care, and the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program, as well as the Congregate Services Initiative and the Long Term Care Ombudsman. Spending will be reduced for NY Connects, but will not result in a reduction to funds used by localities to implement this program. In addition, funding is eliminated for the Affordable Independent Living Senior Housing Pilot, Social Workers for Geriatric In-Home Care, End of Life Care, Enriched Social Adult Day Centers, Long Term Care Insurance Outreach and Education, Sustainable Transportation, and the Geriatric In-Home Medical Care Pilot. Even after these reductions, there will still be \$110.6 million of state funds spent on community senior services in 2009-10.


Changes are proposed to the Elderly Pharmaceutical Assistance Program, and the Governor has increased funding by \$2 million in additional funding for local Area Agencies on Aging and community-based organizations to assist EPIC enrollees in selecting, accessing and maximizing appropriate Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage. Some savings from changes in EPIC drug coverage will help reduce cost sharing for low-income seniors.

Additional information of interest to older New Yorkers can be found in the NYSOFA budget as well as in other state agency budgets.

This information is available for review on the Division of the Budget web page at <http://www.budget.state.ny.us>.

We will continue to work with the Area Agencies on Aging, the aging services network and the advocacy community to support Governor Paterson's commitment to protect the most vulnerable New Yorkers. We will partner with the aging services

network to identify and develop creative solutions to meet the needs of all older New Yorkers. We will invest in volunteerism and encourage the retiring baby boomers to provide service to their neighbors and communities.



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*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.*

David A. Paterson                      Michael J. Burgess  
*Governor*                                      *Director*

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