



**Commission**  
on  
**Aging**

# Senior Update

...The Eyes & Ears of Alameda County Seniors  
Senior Information & Assistance: 1-800-510-2020

*Senior Update*

*July/August/September 2007*

## **Problem Gambling and Older Adults**

By Katherine Aguas-Aclan  
Special Projects Coordinator

Although problem gambling among older adults often is a hidden or ignored addiction, it is a growing problem in California. According to studies conducted between 1999 and 2003, calls to California problem-gambling hotlines from older adults increased 25 percent. Between 1975 and 1998, people over 65 experienced the greatest lifetime increase in gambling (from 35 percent to 80 percent).

Many older adults consider gambling a social activity, but it can become a devastating addiction, causing severe mental health problems. Major life changes such as death of a loved one or friend, can contribute to depression and isolation. Gambling, especially at casinos and their emphasis on acceptance and inclusion, may be an attractive respite from feelings of isolation and depression. Unfortunately, the stigma of seeking treatment among older adults makes it less likely for service providers to identify a problem. Consequently, some older adult problem gamblers are driven to drastic measures such as suicide. Older white males have a higher rate of suicide; more so than any other age group.

The American Society on Aging (ASA) helps address this problem. Under contract to the National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse, with funding from the Office of Problem Gambling of the California Department of Alcohol & Drug Programs, ASA provides free training and technical assistance to California older adult service providers. Trainings cover problem gambling research, assessment tools, and treatment options. ASA's problem gambling web site, [www.asaging.org/pg](http://www.asaging.org/pg), provides additional information on this growing public health concern. For more information, or to schedule free training for your staff, please contact Katherine Aguas-Aclan, Special Projects Coordinator, at 415-974-9627, or [katherinea@asaging.org](mailto:katherinea@asaging.org).

## **Alcoholism Among Seniors**

By Quincy Campbell, MD  
Commissioner

Alcoholism at any age creates a serious problem, but among the elderly, it is a chronic health crisis. Although recent advances in medical technology have had a profound effect on improving the quality and quantity of life for our society, alcoholism among the elderly presents a chronic health problem of monumental proportion. The problem is especially significant in view of the fact that it is primarily low-income minorities who are victimized by the addiction. The racial and ethnic disparities have been documented by the Department of Health and Human Services. Chronic liver disease resulting from alcohol abuse has not received adequate publicity, but is increasingly a concern in public health awareness. The liver is a large and complex organ of the body. It is the destruction of this vital and indispensable organ, which makes life unsustainable. The liver filters toxins, creates bile, distributes nutrients, and produce certain proteins which has an enormous impact on the health of seniors.

The most severe form of chronic liver disease, resulting from alcohol abuse, is cirrhosis, an irreversible hardening and shrinking of the liver tissue. This condition blocks the normal flow of blood through the liver, resulting in malfunction of the liver. Approximately 26,000 deaths each year are attributed to cirrhosis.

Alcoholic liver disease, among seniors, results from years of alcohol abuse. Females are more susceptible to the complications, demonstrating an interruption to the normal metabolism of proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Liver damage cannot be reversed, but treatment can stop or delay further progression and reduce complications, if started early.

The best treatment for seniors is to abstain from alcohol consumption. Health agencies must focus on the elimination of alcoholism among seniors.

**Alzheimer's**

**By Micheal Pope**  
**Alzheimer's Services of the East Bay**

A daughter visits her father during Thanksgiving and finds her father a "little off." She remembers a man who was able to provide for his family while being the pillar of his community. He even took time out of his busy workday for a month to teach her to ride her bicycle and now he cannot recall this experience and therefore cannot share her memories. What is wrong? Could he have Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia and how does she fix him? What impacts will this have on her own life and how does she prepare for the changes that will take place in her father's behavior and health.

Alzheimer's is a disease that robs an individual of the snapshots of their lives. It is progressive and changes the way in which a person can communicate with their family and their community. A world that once was filled with adventure is now a scary place that is hard to understand. The connections the individual once cherished are harder to make and the distance between the past and their current reality are joined in a kaleidoscope creating a shift in what is memory vs. reality.

What can we do as a community to assist our neighbors who are living and coping with Alzheimer's? We can first of all understand the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia.

Alzheimer's is a neurological disease that is progressive. It results in the irreversible loss of nerve cells in the brain that impairs cognition (thinking, memory, learning, using language), behavior and mood. Eventually, symptoms can interfere with a person's ability to work, care for one's self, and relate to others socially.

Dementia is the term used to describe the memory loss and the individual's reasoning ability. Dementia is a symptom of Alzheimer's. Individuals experience dementia from other diseases or brain abnormalities.

Alzheimer's or a diagnosis of dementia is something that none of us wants to hear! But, in Alameda County alone there are approximately 19,187 families living and coping with the diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

Families can contact Alzheimer's Services of the East Bay (ASEB) to explore their options. ASEB

is a dementia-specific Adult Day Health Care program designed to support both the individual diagnosed with dementia and their caregiver(s). ASEB provides services Monday-Friday from 8am-6pm at three locations located throughout Alameda County. There is support available...give ASEB a call at 644-8292.

**2007 Healthy Aging Fair**

**By Peter Bailey**  
**Commissioner**

The Health and Safety Committee of the Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging has announced that plans are underway for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Healthy Aging Fair, to be held at the Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd, Hayward, on Wednesday, September 12, 2007.

Promoting the health and safety of our Alameda County community, the Fair offers a variety of health clinics, screenings, demonstrations and general information affecting seniors as a whole. Among the many screenings being offered are Diabetes/Glucose Screening; Blood Pressure Screening; Pharmacist Consultations for appropriate drugs and medicines; Bone Density Scanning; Podiatry Services; Cholesterol Screening; Hearing Screening; Balance and Gait Testing and other health related subjects.

Senior Centers throughout Alameda County are encouraged to promote the Fair through their centers, and take advantage of this free service. Last year more than 600 people attended.

To encourage attendance, the Fair has scheduled transportation from various senior centers to the venue, shuttle service from the Hayward BART Station, and free parking at Centennial Hall. A free lunch will be served to all attendees, and raffle prizes will be awarded during the four-hour event, from 10:00 am through 2:00 pm.

The Fair is interested in expanding its services, screenings, clinics and displays and extends an open invitation to health care providers to participate in this worthy program. For more information, please contact Mr. Delbert Walker at (510) 577-3532 or by e-mail at [dwalker2@acgov.org](mailto:dwalker2@acgov.org).

**Senior Update Editorial Board:** F. Rose, C. Steiner, G. Tucker, Q. Campbell, F. Howell, S. Stadmire, J. Hunt, N. Hartschen, M. Schiffman, K. Bridges, A. Holloway, and S. Braxton.

## Commissioners & Staff Complete CarFit Training



By Delbert Walker  
Area Agency on Aging

Staff of the Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, Public Health SIPP/EMS, Supervisor Nate Miley's Office and Commissioners from the Advisory Commission on Aging participated in a CarFit training and assessment on May 21st and 22nd.

CarFit is an educational program developed by the American Society on Aging in collaboration with the American Automobile Association, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association. Statistics indicate that by 2030, there will be more than 30 million older drivers on our roads. The CarFit Program's goal is to keep seniors driving safely for as long as possible by helping mature drivers learn how to make their vehicle "fit" better and enhance their safety.

Alameda County Public Health, Alameda County Library, City of Fremont, and the Tri-City Elder Coalition sponsored the two-day CarFit Training and Mobility Resource Fair, where 93 senior drivers received a safety assessment. Two CarFit Assessment Events have been planned for the Summer and Fall of 2007. Cardinal Point Retirement Community and Mastick Senior Center will sponsor a July event in Alameda. Ashland Community Center and Alameda County Commission on Aging's Health & Safety Committee will sponsor an October event in Ashland. For more information, you may contact Delbert Walker at 510-577-3532 or Colleen Campbell at 510-577-3535.

## A Movie Review- Away From Her

Frank Howell  
Commissioner

Julie Christie memorably portrays the heartache of Alzheimer's disease, when her husband is forced to commit her to a rest home. There she gradually fades from his life, as she becomes involved with another patient. The film was directed by Sarah Polley, age 28. The cast includes: Gordon Pinsent, Olympia Dukakis, Michael Murphy, Wendy Crewson, and Julie Christie, who came out of retirement to play the demanding role.

## Alzheimer's Disease and Prevention

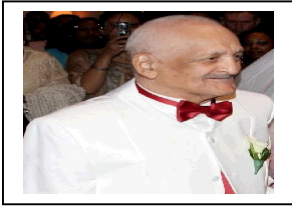
By Frank Howell  
Commissioner

These days, when we read about various diseases that are prevalent among older adults, we get a list of complex diseases such as, diabetes, heart diseases, and arthritis. Often included with the list are warnings to avoid specific foods or activities. Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is one of the complex diseases on the list, however, there is less certainty about what can be done to prevent or delay the condition. The literature on AD has not been able to provide definitive information on prevention.

Let's look at what we know about AD:

- Age is a risk factor for AD:
  - The risk of developing the disease doubles every 5 years over the age of 65, and
  - Half of all people over 85 have AD.
- Genetics is a risk factor for AD:
  - Scientists have found genetic links to both early and late onset AD.
- Intellectually challenging activities delay the onset of AD. Activities such as:
  - Listening to the radio,
  - Working crossword puzzles,
  - Reading,
  - Visiting museums, and
  - Participating in social activities.

Promising leads have evolved from the Religious Order Study conducted by the National Institute of Aging. Investigators followed the progressive aging of over 700 participants and concluded that keeping the brain active is associated with reduced AD risk. Other studies have shown similar results, suggesting that the more formal education a person has, the better his or her memory and learning ability. For more information about AD and the Religious Order Study go to <http://www.nia.nih.gov>.



## Congratulations Hatch!

**Delane Sims  
Commissioner**

He cooks, cleans, does his laundry, takes his daily bath and helps others in his complex fix small appliances. That may be normal for some, but at 108 years old it's akin to a miracle.

Hatch was born in 1898 in Louisiana, but his family soon moved to Houston, Texas. He had two sisters and five brothers, all gone now. His grandmother lived in Oakland, so he'd take the train to come visit on and off. He was here during the 1906 quake, but he traveled for years as a merchant marine, working on cargo ships all over the world. He taught himself Spanish when he was in Mexico City. He also went to Africa and Canada.

It wasn't until 1933 that he moved to Oakland for good. He didn't travel much after that, working as a blacksmith, an auto mechanic and a taxi driver.

He had a son early on, who died many years ago. Then his daughter came along late in life. Very late, think Anthony Quinn or Tony Randall. So she is amazingly young to have a 108-year-old father.

"He is the best daddy in the world," his daughter said, hugging Hatch. "He worked three jobs most of his life, mostly to take good care of me."

It's amazing how fit Mr. Hatch is; his memory is excellent, and he is in very good health. His doctor remarked, "His blood pressure is that of an 18 year old." Except for a fire that burned about 20% of his body in 1971, Mr. Hatch is in great health. Who says that all seniors have to look forward to is a myriad of health problems? Mr. Hatch is proving them all wrong. He is often asked the question, what has contributed to your longevity? His usual response is, "I didn't do anything it's all due to the good Lord's grace."

This Oakland resident may just be one of our oldest active citizens. One of his famous lines is, "I hope you live forever and I never die".

## Shingles

**By Sylvia Stadmire  
Commissioner**

I didn't know that shingles had the potential to be serious. More importantly, I didn't know I was at risk of developing shingles.

If you've had chickenpox, you are at risk for this potentially serious disease. Nine out of ten adults in the United States have had chickenpox and you were probably one of them. The virus that causes chickenpox also causes shingles. The virus remains inactive in your body, if the virus becomes active again, it can cause shingles.

As you get older, your immune system weakens and your risk for shingles increases. In fact, of the estimated 1 million cases of shingles in the United States every year, almost half of them occur in adults aged 60 or older. One out of two people who live to age 85 will develop shingles.

Shingles can be painful and potentially serious. The first signs of shingles may include itching, tingling, and burning. A few days later a blistering rash appears, which can last up to 30 days. For most people, the pain associated with the rash lessens as it heals. For some people, shingles may lead to pain that can last for months or even years after the rash heals. This is called post herpetic neuralgia (PHN). The pain from PHN can range from burning or throbbing to pain that is stabbing or shooting. For many people with PHN, even the touch of soft clothing or a slight breeze against the skin can be painful. Shingles can lead to other serious complications that may include scarring, skin infections, muscle weakness, and decrease or loss of vision or hearing. For more information, call 1-888-874-4645 or visit [shingles.info.com](http://shingles.info.com)

## Ecstasy

**Frank Rose  
Commissioner**

The District 6 Oakland Police Service Area (PSA) Commander has launched a campaign, with the assistance of a youth organization and district 6 Neighborhood Services Coordinators (NSCs) and Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils (NCPCs). The campaign is designed to alert district 6 residents to the growing popularity of the Ecstasy drug among young drug abusers. For seniors interested in supporting youth, please visit the website below for additional information and photos of ecstasy and other frequently abused drugs.

<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/multimedia.html>

## Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program



The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) provide low- income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

The purposes of the program are to:

- Provide resources in the form of fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs;
- Increase the consumption of agricultural commodities; and
- Develop or aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

In order to be eligible for the program, a senior:

- Must be at least 60 years old,
- Have income at or below \$18,130 per year,
- Be a resident of Alameda County, and
- Has not received a coupon booklet this year.

*For locations of 2007 Farmers' Markets see the insert.*

## Recognizing A Stroke

**S**-Ask the individual to **SMILE**; if the smile is lopsided, a stroke likely occurred.

**T**-Ask the individual to **TALK**; if the speech is slurred, a stroke likely occurred.

**R**-Ask the individual to **RAISE ARMS**, if the person cannot raise both arms, a stroke likely occurred.

## TipBits

### The San Leandro Chamber

Delane Sims  
Commissioner

The San Leandro Chamber is doing something special for seniors. They sponsor a group of local businesses that provide services for the elderly and disabled, with an emphasis on homebound seniors. This breakout group of San Leandro Chamber members, called Senior Moments, provides a wide variety of products and services to all seniors. Senior Moments was designed to create memorable and outstanding service to the senior community. Some of the resources offered are: assisted living facilities, eye surgery assistance, financial planning, wills/estate assistance, foot care, insurance, and much more. For more information about Senior Moments call the San Leandro Chamber of Commerce at 510-351-1481 or visit the website at:

[http://www.sanleandrochamber.com/senior\\_moment.htm](http://www.sanleandrochamber.com/senior_moment.htm).

### Homeowner and Renter Assistance Program

This program is available to homeowners and renters who are blind, disabled, or over the age of 62. The maximum annual household income is \$42,770. The filing period is from July 1 through October 15, 2007. Homeowners must have owned and lived in their residence since December 31, 2006. Renters must pay at least \$50 per month in rent (house, apartment, residential care facility, etc.) and their landlords must pay state property tax. Benefits vary according to individual circumstances; payments can range from \$15 to \$472. Forms are available from the State's Franchise Tax Board at 1-800-868-4171, (TTY 1-800-822-6282) or on the web at [www.ftb.ca.gov](http://www.ftb.ca.gov). Seniors may obtain help applying for the Homeowner and Renter Assistance program by contacting their local senior centers or calling Senior Information and Assistance (1-800-510-2020) for selected sites in their area.

**Beware:** *There are private companies who will offer to process your application for a fee—there is NO cost for applying for this program.*

## Health and Aging in Alameda County

### Alameda County Public Health Department

As we address specific health concerns facing older adults, we need to review some health data collected by the Alameda County Public Health Department, whose mission is to work in partnership with the community to ensure the optimal health and well being of all county residents.

The *Alameda County Health Status Report 2006* describes the health status of county residents by examining a range of social, demographic and health indicators that are examined by age, gender and ethnicity. Here are some key findings related to health and aging in Alameda County:

- As a percentage of the total population, the age group 25 to 34 years decreased, while the age group 45 to 54 years increased. This is consistent with national patterns and the aging of the baby boom generation.
- The county population has been aging, since 1970. The percentage of persons 65 years and older increased slightly from 8.6% in 1950 to 10.2% in 2000.
- In older age groups 45 years and above, the number of females exceeds the number of males.
- The percentage of adults aged 18-64 without health insurance increased from 11.4% in 2001 to 15.6% in 2003. Health insurance promotes access to a regular source of health care, which is important for people with chronic health problems. Uninsured persons often delay health care, or do not seek care, leading to later diagnoses and poor management of health problems.
- Life expectancy at birth in Alameda County was 79.2 years during 2001 to 2003. In keeping with national trends, life expectancy in Alameda County has increased, by about four years during the past decade. The improvement in life expectancy at birth was
  - seen in every ethnic group: 4.2 years for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 3.3 years for European Americans, 3.1 years for African Americans, and 3.0 years for Latin Americans.
  - Asians have the highest life expectancy at birth, 85.9 years, while African Americans have the lowest, 71.6 years at birth, a difference of 14.3 years. On average, European Americans live 7.1 years longer than African Americans. While this gap has been narrowing over the past decade at the national level, it has not been narrowing in Alameda County.
  - Females of every ethnic group have a higher life expectancy than males. The differences range from 4.5 years for European Americans to 7.6 years for African Americans.
  - Health and life expectancy increase with wealth. This means that wealthier people live longer, healthier lives, as material wealth provides better access to key social determinants of health.
  - Heart disease was the leading cause of death, followed by cancer and stroke for every ethnic group except American Indians and Asians. In the latter two groups, cancer was the leading cause, followed by heart disease. The third cause for American Indians was chronic liver disease/cirrhosis, while for Asians it was stroke. From 2001 to 2003, an average of 2,033 people per year died from Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) in Alameda County. After age 35, CHD mortality increased with age. Between ages 35 and 64, the rate was two to three times higher for males than females. For the 85 and older age group, there was no gender difference.
  - Among the elderly, chronic diseases (heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease and influenza/pneumonia) are the predominant cause of death.
  - From 2001 to 2003, an average of 801 people per year died from stroke in Alameda County. Stroke mortality increased with age starting at

about 45 years. Rates were only slightly higher among males than females until age 85 when female rate exceeded the male rate by 18%.

- Rates of hospitalization for diabetes related illnesses increased with age, as rates peaked in the age group 64 to 84. Male rates exceeded female rates by small margins after age 45. African American rates of diabetes hospitalization were significantly higher than any other ethnic group. After age 35 the death rate increased and was highest among males age 85 and older.
- Premature or early death is measured in years of potential life lost. Since most deaths occur among elderly people, death rates are dominated by the causes of death most common to the elderly. The largest contributor to years of potential life lost is cancer, followed by heart disease and unintentional injury.
- Cancer largely affects people over age 35, with the male to female difference increased from 7% for ages 45-54 to 56% for the age group 85 and older. The most notable difference between leading causes of death is that intentional injury (homicide and suicide) ranked among the top ten causes of premature death and unintentional injury moved from the fifth leading cause to third.
- Deaths due to unintentional injuries were higher among males than females in every age group. The highest rate was seen among males 85 years and older. It was two times higher than that among females 85 years and older.
- Suicide rates were higher among males than females, with the highest rates among older European American males, 30% to 50% higher than the county rate and roughly two to four times higher than those of other ethnic groups.
- From 2001-2003, Alzheimer's disease was 2.1% of leading causes of deaths in Alameda County.

Overall, the above data supports the national trend of a rapidly growing older adult population, 65 years and older. As this group increases, more services will be required for the prevention, treatment and management of chronic and acute health conditions.

For a copy of the complete *Alameda County Health Status Report 2006*, you may download it from [www.acphd.org](http://www.acphd.org) or contact the Alameda County Public Health Department at 510-267-8020.

## ***Senior Update***

Alameda County Area Agency on Aging  
Advisory Commission on Aging  
6955 Foothill Blvd., Suite 300  
Oakland, CA 94605

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***Senior Update***

***July/August/September 2007***

### **SENIOR INFORMATION**

**“Promoting Health and Wellness for Sixty-Plus Adults”** The United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County invite *you, your family and friends* to attend the ***4th Annual Health Living Festival***

DATE: Friday, July 20, 2007  
TIME: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
PLACE: Lake Merritt Garden Center and  
Bandstand  
666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland

For more information, please call 510-729-0852 or visit our website at [www.usoac.org/hlf](http://www.usoac.org/hlf).

**Citizens for the Disabled & Seniors in Alameda County (CDSac) formerly SAVE OAKLAND SENIORS** meet every fourth Friday at the office of the United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County, Eastmont Town Center, 7200 Bancroft Avenue, Ground Floor, Suite 180 in Oakland. To get onto our mailing list or to rsvp for a meeting, please call 510-670-5717.

### **Annual Paratransit Workshop**

The Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) in partnership with the Paratransit Advisory Planning Committee (PAPCO) will present the 2007 ACTIA/PAPCO Paratransit workshop on Monday, July 30, at the MTC Auditorium at 101 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Oakland. The purpose of the workshop is to educate and inform seniors and people with disabilities on issues relating to paratransit in Alameda County. For more information and to RSVP, contact Naomi Armenta at 510-267-6118 or send e-mails to [narmenta@actia2022.com](mailto:narmenta@actia2022.com).