



SENIOR UPDATE
 AREA AGENCY ON AGING
 ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING
 4925 FOOTHILL BLVD., SUITE 300
 OAKLAND, CA 94603-1907

July/August/September 2011

Senior Update

...The Eyes and Ears of Alameda County Seniors

Commission on Aging

Rebuilding the Infrastructure

Ron DeDiemar, P. E., Commissioner

Inside this issue:

Rebuilding the Infrastructure	1
Tips for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Chronic Pain	1
Make Sure You Get The Right Amount	3
10th Annual Healthy Aging Fair	7
Senior Information	8
Calendar of Events	9

Our American way of life depends on a healthy, vibrant, and modern infrastructure. Wikipedia, the internet information site, defines Infrastructure as “the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g., buildings, roads, and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.” Roads and streets are a vital part of this infrastruc-

ture. Therefore, infrastructure is a necessity for effective and economical transportation. Transportation means travel! Our basic ability to travel for fun or work, long or short distances – by automobile, train, truck, airplane or ship, is mostly taken for granted. Emergency civil defense vehicles, such as fire trucks and EMT vehicles would be ineffective without Roads and streets. Trucks that deliver

food and other essential goods use roads and streets. Roads look simple enough; however when not right we certainly want to complain. We do not appreciate pot holes, cracks, poor or worn striping, poor traffic signals, too much traffic, etc. Certainly when things are not right with our roads and streets, transportation becomes difficult.

Continued on p. 2

Tips for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Chronic Pain

Moshe Lewis, MD, MPH, MBA



Alice Francis and her husband Alan had always been a dynamic and evenly-matched couple. They both worked in high-energy careers that they loved; they traveled the world together; they exercised

together regularly, and led extremely active lives. When Alan’s first flares of chronic back pain prevented him from keeping up with their fast-paced lifestyle, Alice quickly realized that their relationship was about to

undergo some drastic adjustments. “This transition has been life-changing,” she admitted, “and although I wouldn’t want anyone to have chronic pain, I have learned a lot of

Continued on p. 4

Rebuilding the Infrastructure

continued from cover

Roads have been around in many forms for thousands of years. Modern roads are basically made from sand, gravel or stone. This is laid as a sub base and base to support and drain the pavement surface that we drive or ride on. The sand, gravel or stone commodity is called “construction aggregate.” The actual pavement surface of a road or street is made from a mixture of construction aggregate along with Portland cement (white powdery material) or asphalt/ bitumen (heavy oil) to form “concrete.” Approximately 80% of Portland cement concrete is aggregate and approximately 95% of asphaltic concrete is aggregate.

Sand, gravel and stone are essential to almost everything in our way of life. Airport runways which allow planes to land and take off; foundations for virtually all homes and buildings; even fertilizers to enhance food crops, are some examples of other infrastructure related uses. Alameda County currently has six sand and gravel quarries. Several are visible

along Stanley Boulevard in Pleasanton and along I680 in Sunol. These quarries currently employ approximately 130 men and women and currently produce close to 9,000,000 tons of construction aggregate yearly – this is down substantially from prior years due to the current economic slowdown. This does not take into account all of the trucking and construction jobs required to deliver and lay down the base and pavement surfaces.

These quarries all strive to be environmentally friendly i.e. “green.” One green commitment is accepting old paving materials for recycling and reuse in the sub base and base components of new roads. Safety, good housekeeping, and land stewardship are operating norms for all modern quarries. All quarries are required to prepare for reserve depletion and eventual reclamation. Reclamation plans will essentially satisfy long term land development needs or return the land to wildlife habitat.

A well-developed mining and reclamation plan provides the necessary materials for existing road maintenance and new road construction with little effect on our quality of life as these materials are extracted and processed over many decades; while working toward a final reclamation plan that may eventually convert the land into a better place than its original form. All quarries must file a mining and reclamation plan with state and local governmental agencies. The life of a quarry is typically 50 years or more... serving as a local source for construction aggregate providing revenue and savings for communities including sales tax dollars and reduction of overall truck traffic. America has always been proud of our wonderful roads and streets. This has allowed us to travel at will by all modes of transportation. Our roads and streets are an essential part of our way of life.



Make Sure You Get The Right Amount

Sarah Kim - Lee, Social Security Regional Public Affairs Specialist

At Social Security, our goal is to make sure you are paid the correct amount, on time, every month. Some things have made that job easier over our more than 70 years of paying benefits, such as direct deposit and electronic application systems. But some of the factors that determine your payment amount still depend on good old fashioned human intervention. And in some cases, getting the correct payment amount depends on you. You certainly don't want to be paid less than you're entitled to receive. But what can be even more difficult, in the long run, is to be overpaid — in which case you'll probably have to pay us back, cutting your payment down each month until the debt is repaid.

What can cause an overpayment? Sometimes an overpayment (or even an underpayment) occurs because the person receiving benefits did not report a change to us. For example, if you receive Social Security retirement or survivors benefits and are under your full retirement age and working, we usually ask you to estimate your

earnings for the year. If you realize your earnings will be higher or lower than you estimated, let us know as soon as possible so we can adjust your benefits.

If you receive Social Security disability benefits, you should tell us if you take a job or become self-employed, no matter how little you earn. You also need to report if you begin receiving or have a change in any worker's compensation or other public disability benefits — or if your disabling condition improves.

If you receive SSI, you need to report any changes that can increase or reduce the amount of your benefit, such as changes in address (even if you get electronic payments), changes in living arrangements, income, or increased savings that inch over the resource limit (\$2,000 for an individual, \$3,000 for a couple). Any changes in your living arrangements, income, or resources could change your SSI payment amount.

Learn more about the kinds of things you need to report when you receive Social Security retirement and

survivors benefits by reading our online publication:

www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10077.html

Read about reporting responsibilities for people receiving Social Security disability benefits at:

www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10153.html

Learn all about the sorts of things to report when you receive SSI by reading over this online publication:

www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11011.html

If you're underpaid in any given month, once we verify the information that caused you to be underpaid, we will send you any money you are due. If you're overpaid, read our online fact sheet to learn what happens next at:

www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10098.html

With your help and by diligently reporting any applicable changes, we'll achieve a goal we can all agree on: paying you the right amount, on time, every month.

Tips for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Chronic Pain

continued from cover

lessons regarding pain care and advocating for my spouse in this adventure.”

Alice does not like referring to herself as her husband’s “caregiver,” but it is an apt description of the role she has had to fill in Alan’s health care management. As her husband’s treatment progressed through office visits, complex pain regimens, and four corrective surgeries, Alice has taken on an active role in helping Alan to manage his chronic pain. In the six years since Alan’s degenerative disc disease was first diagnosed, Alice has learned to be an effective champion of her husband’s medical care while maintaining her own positive outlook on life. Thousands of spouses and children of pain sufferers find themselves in Alice’s position every year. Becoming involved in the care and treatment

of a suffering loved one is a natural and loving gesture, but it can easily take its toll on even the most patient caregiver. Here are some of Alice’s tips for others who are caring for loved ones suffering from chronic pain.

Selecting doctors

- After you or your partner have researched several doctors, set up appointments/interviews with your top 3 choices.
- It’s a good idea for you as the caretaker to attend these appointments so that you have two sets of ears. It’s amazing how things can be interpreted differently between the person who is in pain and the person who is there to support!
- This sounds crazy, but I suggest you and the pain patient dress nicely for the appointment. We have found we are definitely treated with a higher level of credibility and respect.
- Let the doctor know that you are deciding what will be the best match in terms of a relationship with a new doctor and you have some questions as well.

Sometimes I asked the questions and sometimes my husband did. It really depended on his pain and anxiety level that day. If a doctor is reluctant to be interviewed, that should tell you something.

- Take notes! It is very important in all appointments, quite frankly.
 - Here are some good questions to ask at an initial interview.
 - How long has the doctor provided pain management?
 - Does the doctor give injections, and if so, where were they trained and what is their general outlook on patient injection needs? (In our experience, doctors who were trained via Mayo Clinic will give only 3 injections per year. Doctors trained in other programs are sometime more open to assessing the number of injections based on the need of the patient).
 - What is the doctor’s general philosophy on pain management? If they don’t have one, that’s a red flag.
 - How many doctors are in the practice? Will patients generally see the doctor or the physician’s assistant?
- Continued on p.5**

Tips for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Chronic Pain

Continued

- How far in advance do you need to make an appointment?
- Who is the contact when you are unable to reach the doctor?
- Will you be able to get copies of all medical records and appointment notes? I always request this on a monthly or quarterly basis. It's important to see what the doctor's interpretation of the appointment was, which can be quite different than yours or the patient's.
- Has the doctor ever experienced long-term or chronic pain? Although this isn't a deal-breaker, the doctor's firsthand experience is a plus. They will most certainly have a high level of compassion and understanding for what the patient is going through.

Alice stresses that finding the right rapport between a doctor and the patient is extremely important, since this doctor-patient relationship could potentially last for years. She found that helping Alan to be proactive about his own emotional needs made it easier to find doctors who were a good match for Alan. "At the beginning

of our pain journey, it was very important for my husband to explain to a doctor who he was before pain. He wanted them to have a glimpse of what his life was like before this happened. He was struggling to deal with all the changes going on, and needed people to know that he hadn't always been the 'patient'. "Some doctors were very attentive during this dialogue. Others were very dismissive and condescending. Their reaction was almost always a sign of the care and compassion to come. I suggest the patient or caretaker come up with some brief summary of activities and interests prior to the pain and see what kind of reaction you elicit."

Providing care for your loved one

Carry a list of all medications and amounts the patient is taking. If there is an emergency situation, it will be necessary to provide the EMT's or other medical help with that information. If you live with the patient you care for, be observant as to what time of day they

take their meds. Make it clear that this isn't policing, but rather just another set of eyes. When someone is in chronic pain, memory can be affected, and it's just good to have a general idea of your patient's pattern of medication use.

Get to know your pharmacist. I know our pharmacist very well. In fact, I can call the pharmacy and say, "It's Alice", and they know who I am! It's important to build a rapport so that you can ask questions and receive the best customer service possible. LISTEN to your loved one! This was VERY difficult for me to learn. When he would complain about the pain or express frustration, I wanted to "fix it." Listening was not part of my plan. Many times, he didn't want me to fix anything. He just needed me to say, "That must be really hard," or "I'm so sorry you are having to go through this." Understanding

Tips for Caregivers of Loved Ones with Chronic Pain

Continued

and improving our communication has helped both of us a great deal.

Alice offers further perspective on the changing relationship of chronic pain patients and their caregiver companions. "My husband went through not only a huge physical adjustment to dealing with chronic pain, but an equally large psychological adjustment. Without work or exercise or the ability to live an active lifestyle, he just didn't know who he was anymore. I went through a similar adjustment, I'm sure."

"Acknowledging this transition, and how hard it must be, was very important for both of us. Be patient during this time, because your loved one really needs to feel vital and normal

Strongly suggest to your loved one they go see a therapist or psychologist to work through these issues. It can be a huge help to you both."

Take care of yourself

"Of all the things I have done in my life," says Alice, "taking care of or being in a relationship with someone you love who is in chronic pain is by far the most difficult. In the beginning I felt like my good days were completely dependent on his good days. That's No way to live.

"You do need to provide love, compassion, sometimes some physical and mental support. But you also have to realize that

you CANNOT fix or change the situation. You can't make the person take meds or not take meds. You can't do physical therapy for them. You can't take the pain away so you just have to let it go."

"I developed a sense of normalcy around all of this. I have a career that I love-- it keeps me very busy. I go shopping and traveling some with girlfriends. I exercise on my own, and do things just for me. This new 'normal' life really helps provide Alan with a sense of 'normal' as well. I strongly encourage you not to forget about you in this process."





Senior Information



National Council on Aging Launches One Away Campaign

www.ncoa.org

More than 13 million older adults are considered economically insecure, living on just \$21,780 a year or less. Every day, these seniors, and millions of Boomers, have to choose whether to pay for food, housing, utilities, or out-of-pocket for medication costs. They live one bad break, one accident, or one layoff away from economic disaster. To spotlight their struggles—and call for change—the National Council on Aging (NCOA) is launching One Away, a national advocacy campaign that uses video to allow older adults to tell their own stories. To view stories and to share your own, go to the website www.OneAway.org. As part of the One Away campaign, NCOA has also published *A Blueprint for Increasing the Economic Security of Older Adults: Reauthorizing the Older Americans Act*. The report outlines specific recommendations to improve elders' economic security through reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA), which is scheduled to occur this year. The report is available on the NCOA website www.ncoa.org.

Transportation Innovation

Transportation is a key link to vital everyday needs such as getting groceries, employment, medical services, and social activities. Community-based service providers are working to support seniors in their everyday mobility through innovative programs, including the following:

Travel Training programs educate older adults and disabled persons on how to use public transportation.

United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County—Senior Group Travel Training, 510-729-0852, www.usoac.org

Center for Independent Living—Persons with Disabilities One-on-One Training, 510-841-4776, www.cilberkeley.org

Fremont Paratransit—Tri-City Travel Training, 510-574-2053

WHEELS Travel Training (Tri-Valley area), 925-455-7510

Senior Ride/Escort programs provide rides and/or volunteer accompaniment to appointments for eligible seniors.

LIFE ElderCare—VIP Rides Program (Tri-City area), 510-574-2090, www.lifeeldercare.org

Oakland Paratransit for the Elderly and Disabled—Subsidized taxi and van rides, 510-238-3036, www2.oaklandnet.com

Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley—Senior Transportation Program (Tri-Valley area, medical appointments only), 925-931-5387, www.ssptv.org

The Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTA) funds a number of these programs and publishes a guide to accessible transit, *Access Alameda: Transportation Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities in Alameda County*. To obtain a copy and for more information, call 1-866-901-7272 or visit the website www.accessalameda.org.

Senior Update
Area Agency On Aging
Advisory Commission on Aging
6955 Foothill Blvd, Suite 300
Oakland, CA 94605-1907

Phone: 1-800-510-2020

Fax: 510-577-1962

PRSR T STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN LEANDRO, CA
PERMIT NO. 45

We're On The Web!

http://www.alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/elders_and_disabled_adults/aaa.cfm

Senior Update Editorial Board: S. Johnson– Simon, C. Steiner, R. DeDiemar, N. Hartschen, F. Howell, Bernie Nillo, S. Stadmire, G. Tucker, K. Bridges, A. Holloway, and M. Schulz

July-September

Programs for Older Adults at Alameda County Library Branches

Contact your local Alameda County Library branch, or visit www.aclibrary.org for a schedule.

July (Date and Location TBA)

Mobility Workshop and Resource Fair

Annual event presented by the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority (ACTIA) in partnership with the Paratransit Advisory Planning Committee (PAPCO). For information, contact Naomi Armenta at 510-208-7469 or narmenta@alamedactc.org.

July 15, Friday, 8am-2pm

Oakland Zoo, Knowland Park, 9777 Golf Links Road, Oakland 94605

8th Annual Healthy Living Festival

Presented by United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County. Festival Participants can enjoy a walk through the zoo. This year's Festival will also feature health screenings, financial planning information, and medication drop-off/disposal program. For details call 510-729-0852.

August 10, Wednesday, 10:00am-2:30pm

Chabot College, 25555 Hesperian Boulevard, Hayward 94545

10th Annual Healthy Aging Fair

Presented by Alameda County Commission on Aging. FREE health screenings, exhibitor information about senior services, entertainment, interactive activities, lunch, bus transportation from some senior centers, and free shuttle from South Hayward BART. For details, call 510-577-3532 or 510-577-3540.

August 13, Saturday, 10:00am-3:00pm

Allen Temple Baptist Church, 8501 International Boulevard, Oakland 94621

34th Annual Health Fair

Free Health Screenings including Back to School Physicals for children. For information call 510-544-8910.

September 16, Friday, 10:00am-1:00pm

San Leandro Senior Community Center, 13909 East 14th Street, San Leandro 94578

14th Annual Senior Resource Fair

Presented by San Leandro Senior Services. For information, call 510-577-3462.