



**Commission
on
Aging**

Senior Update

...The Eyes & Ears of Alameda County Seniors

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Senior Information & Assistance: 1-800-510-2020

Access current and past issues of Senior Update: www.acgov.org/adult.htm

Senior Update

January/February/March 2006

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Is Here!

The Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit begins January 1, 2006. May 15th is the last day to sign up for coverage in 2006.

The Medicare & You 2006 handbook was sent to Medicare recipients in October 2005. It provides an overview of the Medicare Part D program and details about prescription drug plans. However, there are some mistakes in the information about California plans listed at the end of the handbook. For corrected information, contact Medicare at 1-800-633-4227 or see www.medicare.gov.

For assistance in selecting a plan, beneficiaries can contact Medicare or contact the local Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) 510-839-0393 or 1-800-434-0222, www.lashicap.org.

People with low incomes and asset levels may qualify for the Low Income Subsidy, financial assistance that will help to pay the Part D premiums, and cover gaps in the standard benefit. People on both Medicare and Medi-Cal (without a share of cost) will automatically receive this assistance. To apply for the Low Income Subsidy, contact the Social Security Administration, 1-800-772-1213, www.ssa.gov.

For information on how Medicare Part D impacts veterans, contact the Veterans Administration Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387), www.va.gov/healtheligibility. For information for survivors and dependents of veterans, contact Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) at 1-800-733-8387, www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/forbeneficiaries.asp.

The National Asian Pacific Center on Aging is providing a national helpline for Asian Pacific American elders to obtain bilingual enrollment assistance and access to translated information about Medicare Part D. To contact the NAPCA Multilingual Helpline Center call 1-800-582-4218 (English), 1-800-582-4218 (Chinese), 1-800-582-4259 (Korean), 1-800-582-4336 (Vietnamese), www.napca.org.

Coping with Grief During the Holidays

Within the last three-month period, Americans celebrated the popular annual holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and the New Year. If we faced these holidays as a bereaved person, we faced the festive period missing a smiling face and seeing an empty chair at the celebration table. Remembrances of past traditions or gatherings may have triggered unexpected emotions.

Holidays, birthdays, anniversary dates, etc. are especially difficult times. The first year of mourning is filled with intense emotions, particularly stirred on special occasions. Perhaps old traditions will need to be adapted or eliminated from your celebrations. Give yourself permission to change plans and schedules from day to day, even from hour to hour.

There are two common signs of holiday blues and/or depression. First is withdrawing into ourselves. This makes us less active and more tired, making it more difficult to achieve healthy coping. Withdrawal causes those around us to excuse our behavior and actions no matter how negative we become. Unfortunately, internal withdrawal can deepen our pain, our isolation, our guilt, or our self-blame.

The second sign of holiday blues is the opposite type of behavior. We bury ourselves in busyness. We may push ourselves and try to get by with less sleep and rest than we need, smiling and acting as we did last year or the year before. "See," we tell the world, "I can go on." We can and do go on, but the healthiest thing we can do for ourselves is to accept that we do feel blue, sad, and tired. We do feel like crying, and it's OK to let the tears cleanse us. If we need help, we can share that need with someone and thus begin to resolve some of our grief and pain.

(see Coping...page 3)



Washington's Birthday

by Doug Brown

The federal holiday set on the third Monday of February is officially named for George Washington's birthday, although popularly known as President's Day. I think that it is important to single out our first president, since he was a big reason we are an independent country.

Others like Madison, Jefferson and Hamilton were the intellectual framers of our celebrated forms of government. George Washington was most important for what he didn't do. His contemporaries like Napoleon and Simon Bolivar established themselves as emperors and dictators once they got as popular as GW. Washington rejected an effort to make him king and refused to serve more terms as President (how many modern-day presidents would voluntarily step down if they could continue to run?).

History books now rightfully teach that great historical figures have mixed legacies. George Washington was a slave owner, holding over 300 people in bondage. He did take the unusual step of arranging for the freedom of all of his slaves after his death. There are thousands of books and articles on our first President. It might be a good winter project to read one of them.

4th Annual Healthy Aging Fair

by Quincy Campbell, Committee Chair

The Commission on Aging's 4th Annual Healthy Aging Fair was presented at Centennial Hall in Hayward, September 14, 2005. The Commission is grateful to the City of Hayward for donating use of the Hall for this event. Members of the Commission's Health and Safety Committee are delighted that we have been able, after three years, to elevate the Health Fair to a level representing all of Alameda County.

The Committee has determined that medical assessment evaluations are most important in popularity among senior attendees. More than 200 elders participated in the bone density scan and balance test. Other memorable events included performances by the East Oakland Senior Center Community Choir, the Japanese Garden Walk, the raffle, and lunch.

Thank you to all the Committee members, sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and to all the seniors for making this event a success. See you in 2006!

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day

On January 16, 2006, we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr., federal holiday. Each year we honor Dr. King on the third Monday of January, near his birthday, January 15th.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ph.D. (1929-1968) was the most renowned leader of the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1950s-1960s, African Americans and supporters used boycotts, marches and other forms of nonviolent protest to demand equal treatment and an end to racism. The Movement led to historic court rulings and legislation including desegregation on buses, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Dr. King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, before being assassinated in 1968. His legacy of nonviolence, activism and leadership continues to inspire movements for justice throughout the world.

Local commemoration events include: "In the Name of Love" 5th Annual Musical Tribute, January 15th, Oakland, 510-287-8880; Freedom Teach-In, January 16th, San Francisco, 510-268-3777.

Creative Change Conference in Oakland

by Frank Howell

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force held its 18th annual conference in November at the Marriott Hotel in Oakland. Several of the 120 workshops featured speakers on the topic of AGEISM and how to combat it. There was special concern expressed that gay, lesbian and transgender issues not be ignored at the December White House Conference on Aging.

The Lavender Seniors of the East Bay presented a workshop on how the organization was founded, outreach programs to closeted seniors, and public outreach to the community.

Over 2500 people attended the conference. A Hospitality Suite For Elders was in operation during the event.

Senior Update Editorial Board: D. Brown, Chair; Q. Campbell, L. Epstein, N. Hartschen, F. Howell, C. McLain, B. Mulholland, F. Rose, T. Santos, J. Selby, C. Steiner, C. Tsao, G. Tucker, L. Valdez, L. Ho, A. Holloway, K. Obidah and S. Braxton, and Desktop Publishing.

(Coping...continued from page 1)

The following are some suggested post-holiday resolutions to help in coping with grief:

- Seek out an old forgotten friend.
- Write a love letter to the one you lost.
- Give a gentle answer to a painful question.
- Manifest your loyalty by word and deed.
- Keep a promise.
- Forego a grudge and forgive someone.
- Appreciate what you have. Express gratitude.
- Laugh a little. Then laugh a little more.
- Welcome a stranger.
- Take pleasure in the wonder of the earth.
- Speak your love. Speak your love again.
- Speak your love still once more.

Thanks to Crisis Support Services of Alameda County for contributing information. For Crisis Support, call 1-800-309-2131.

Parkview Regent Assisted Living

by Christine Steiner

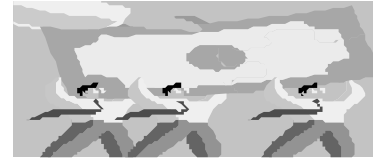
On September 27th, 2005, after 10 years of planning, the City of Pleasanton and partners celebrated the groundbreaking of Parkview Regent Assisted Living.

Located adjacent to the Pleasanton Senior Center and Centennial Park, the development will provide 105 assisted living apartments including 19 for individuals with dementia. Thirty units will be affordable to low-income seniors. Rents for the affordable apartments are projected to start at \$967 - \$1,933 per month, including all levels of service. Market rate apartments are projected to range from \$4,300 - \$6,500 per month.

This is one of the first assisted living developments in the nation to utilize a self-subsidizing mixed-income model allowing low-income seniors to obtain high quality assisted care. The commitment of the City of Pleasanton was crucial to the success of this project. The development team of Bridge Housing and Eskaton, both non-profit developers and care providers, will ensure that the goal of the city to provide affordable housing, to a largely forgotten population of aging seniors, is met. Priority will be given to Pleasanton residents and their family members. Construction is expected to take eighteen months.

Scam Corner

by San Leandro
Councilmember
Tony Santos & Legal
Assistance for Seniors



In the coming issues, "Scam Corner" will discuss scam tactics, some common and successful scams, personal stories of victims and guidelines for protection.

Some Common Scams That Often Target Seniors:

- ◆ You receive a call from someone saying that you've won a prize. However, there's a catch. Before you can receive the prize, you are asked to send in money for processing/administrative fees or taxes.
- ◆ You receive a call from a charity asking for a donation. The caller will not tell you how much of your contribution will go to the actual charity. Legitimate charities do not have a problem giving you this information. Additionally, if you have any doubts, call the charity directly to find out if it is sponsoring a fundraiser.
- ◆ You receive a call from someone who is offering to "repair" your bad credit...for a fee in advance. No one can get negative information removed from his or her credit report if it is accurate. There are legitimate organizations who will help you with credit/financial issues, but will not ask for money before you even meet with them.
- ◆ Scam artists are also using computers to take advantage of people. Never respond to an e-mail that requests personal information such as your Social Security number, bank account numbers or credit card numbers. These individuals may give you the impression that they are from financial institutions. However, legitimate financial institutions do not ask for this type of information via e-mails.

For more information or if you have been SCAMMED, call your local police department, or Legal Assistance for Seniors at 1-800-393-0363.

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Alameda County Area Agency on Aging
Advisory Commission on Aging
6955 Foothill Blvd., Suite 300
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SENIOR INFORMATION

Recognizing a Stroke

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within 3 hours he can totally reverse the effects of stroke. The trick is getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed and getting to the patient within 3 hours. Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. The stroke victim may suffer brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke. Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

- 1.*Ask the individual to SMILE.
- 2.*Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.
- 3.*Ask the person to SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE coherently (i.e. "It is sunny out today").

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 9-1-1 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Energy Assistance Programs - Reminder

Services from PG&E

CARE program: 20% discount for low-income households, 1-866-743-2273, www.pge.com/care.

REACH program: a one-time assistance program, 1-800-933-9677, www.pge.com/reach.

HEAP program: energy bill assistance to low-income households, 510-881-0300 (Alameda County) or 510-644-8544 (Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville).

2006 SSI/CAPI Benefit Increases

In 2006, new benefit amounts for California's SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants) will go into effect. In January, however, most SSI payment levels will remain the same because the State of California decided to delay the federal cost of living increase until April. For information about Supplemental Security Income benefits and 2006 increases, contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. For information about CAPI benefits and 2006 increases, contact the CAPI Consortium, 1-800-648-0954. You may also contact the Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-510-2020 for the new figures.

What to do when your Wheelchair Breaks Down

The Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority provides rides throughout Alameda County for people in wheelchairs who have experienced a mechanical breakdown or other malfunction. The service will also pick up a stranded wheelchair if someone is taken to the hospital in an emergency. The service is FREE of CHARGE and AVAILABLE 24 hours a day. To request a Wheelchair Breakdown service sticker, please call the Fremont Paratransit program at (510) 574-2053. For transportation assistance in the event of a wheelchair breakdown, call toll-free 1-877-50-WHEEL (1-877-509-4335).