

G.R.E.A.T NEWS

GeorgiaCares Referring, Educating, Assisting and Training

Volume 1, Issue 11

September 2005

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Hurricane Katrina

~ Jennie Deese

In the aftermath of the Katrina disaster, all of our partners are providing volunteers, supplies, medications and funds to help survivors. PhRMA member companies have committed more than \$42.5 million in medical supplies, medications and cash. Georgia Task Force Leadership held a conference call on Sept. 9 with DHR officials to map out plans and relief efforts for more than 15,000 evacuees in the state of Georgia.

Everyone sees this as an unparalleled tragedy. In an effort to provide assistance to the people affected by Katrina, GeorgiaCares is listed as an emergency resource for victims needing prescription assistance as well as the Georgia Partnership for Caring. The Georgia State Board of Pharmacy (BOP) has taken a liberal approach in allowing pharmacists to refill prescriptions for Hurricane Katrina refugees, especially those who do not have a prescription vial for verification. Pharmacists are now allowed to use their judgment in providing up to a 30-day supply of medications instead of the normal 72-hour supply in response to the situation. Many drug stores are waiving fees for medication in order to meet the needs of the evacuees. It is wonderful to see all of the good will that is being offered to help those that have had such devastating losses. Thanks to all of our partners and volunteers!



Beyond the Basics

~ Patsy McDoodle

In the near future, AIMS will be capturing specific data for Georgia's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) project and Lifelong Planning (LLP). This will include all the activities and reporting requirements for contracted services under each GeorgiaCares program.

These new changes will simply data entry for staff, counselors and volunteers. Each program will have a separate screen that will allow data to be entered that directly relates to the selected program. Although there is not a specific date for when these changes will take place, training will be provided upon its release. So, look forward to going beyond the basics with AIMS!

AAA Focus of the Month: Southeast Georgia

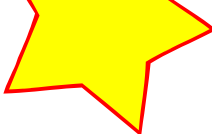
~ Delores Johnson

Greetings Everyone,


This newsletter finds our program, like others, very busy with the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. We have been conducting community forums throughout Southeast Georgia working to ensure seniors and/or individuals not only understand the new benefit, but also know how to access all eligible benefits. We are extremely proud of the community forum aspect. Forum attendees have thanked us for our willingness to bring this important information to them and our dedication to being available and accessible after the event for any additional assistance. As you all may know, here in Southeast Georgia, transportation is a huge barrier to accessing services. By conducting the forums we are educating individuals and giving them the opportunity to complete applications for benefits on site. From an agency standpoint we have established and/or strengthened community partnerships. The forum team consists of the Social Security Administration, the Department of Family and Children's Services, Georgia Legal Services, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, and of course GeorgiaCares. As we educate the community on the new prescription drug benefit, we also educate ourselves on the programs that each agency administers and provides. The knowledge that we gain in turn assists all agencies involved to make necessary referrals.

As the GeorgiaCares workload increases and the program expands, it is only logical that the staffing expands as well. We are very happy to welcome Ursula Roberson and Damita Griffin. Ms. Roberson came into the program as a GeorgiaCares clerk. Upon expanding GeorgiaCares to include Life Long Planning, she was promoted to the Life Long Planning Specialist position. We are also very happy to welcome Ms. Griffin. She is the new GeorgiaCares Clerk. Both ladies bring fresh ideas and experience that will surely assist our program's growth and development.

STAR VOLUNTEER



Our star volunteer is **Mrs. Angela Jones**. Mrs. Jones has faithfully served as the Clinch County Senior Center Director for 10 years as of November 2005. She is the person that everyone calls in Homerville and Clinch County when they have a question or a need. As the community says, "If anyone knows, Angela does." Therefore, becoming a GeorgiaCares volunteer was a perfect addition to her community service. When our program met with Angela about becoming a volunteer, she was thrilled. Angela said she was excited to, in her words, "Gain more knowledge about programs that could help her community." Everyday Angela balances her regular workload at the senior center with her workload as a GeorgiaCares volunteer and her responsibilities as a dedicated wife, mother, and daughter. And yes, she is very successful at all. In fact, Mrs. Jones has established our first GeorgiaCares satellite site. It is manned daily by GeorgiaCares volunteer, Mrs. Odell Burch. As you can see, Mrs. Jones is an example of someone who is not only dedicated to what she does, but she loves what she does.



So, please join our program in appreciating Mrs. Angela Jones, truly a SHINING STAR in the GeorgiaCares family.



State Health Insurance Assistance Program Update

~ Vicki Mikels

LOCAL HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE As we in GeorgiaCares are trying our best to be *the* resource for explaining the new Medicare prescription drug benefit we are hearing the question, “How can Medicare expect elderly seniors to understand this?” Information about Plan D has been coming out a little at a time as intended by the law. We are getting closer to having all the information needed for choosing a drug plan provider. Right now, many private companies are sending out booklets or conducting “van tours” trying to explain Medicare's plan. They include all the major players in the Medicare and managed-care business: the BlueCross plans, Humana, United Healthcare, and others.

Plans must wait until October 1 to send out information about their specific benefit. Beginning November 15, people with Medicare can enroll in the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. People will enroll directly with the plan and NOT with Medicare or Social Security. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services tells us that **about forty** companies have registered plans in Georgia, and many have several options. The details will be revealed October 13 when the Plan Finder Tool goes live on www.medicare.gov.

While the Medicare prescription drug benefit is complicated, there are some simple rules to keep in mind:

-- **Everyone** with Medicare is eligible for the drug benefit.

-- The average priced plan premium in Georgia will be \$33.15 per month – some will be more; some may have no monthly premium

-- There is extra help for those who need it most (the extra help premium subsidy will be \$33.15 – if they choose a higher priced plan, they will have to pay the extra premium).

-- Other sources of prescription coverage like employers and Medigap plans are required to provide people with Medicare notice of “creditable coverage” – this notice will let people know whether or not they need to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan.

So, how do we help people with Medicare understand their choices? We help them sort through the major cost and coverage considerations:

Formularies: Some plans will have “open formularies” with access to nearly all medications – some at a higher cost tier; others available at a lower cost tier. Some plans will not cover all drugs.

Costs: Some plans will offer Medicare's basic plan at a price even lower than the average \$33.15 per month. Some plans may offer more expensive, less complicated plans that change the costs from the standard benefit. One of these plans might have a \$100 deductible instead of the standard \$250, and a simple co-pay arrangement with a fee for each prescription instead of a 25% coinsurance.

Networks: Some plans will partner with large chain drug stores such as Walgreen's, CVS, and others will have several drug retailers including independent pharmacies.

Mail: It is very important for people to pay attention to the mail they receive – mail from other insurance, from Medicare and from Social Security.

Our message to people with Medicare: More information is coming. The *Medicare and You 2006* handbooks -- with plan information for Georgia -- will be mailed to all Medicare households by October 20. People who qualify for extra help will get letters telling them in what plan they are being auto-enrolled. All the information needed to make a choice will be available soon, and GeorgiaCares can help people with Medicare sort it all out. Right now we can talk about these issues; starting October 13, we can review all the plan information on www.medicare.gov.

A Word from our Partner: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Medicare Provides Extra Help with Drug Costs

If you or someone you care about has Medicare, it's time to start thinking about Medicare's new prescription drug coverage.

Real Savings

The new coverage can provide real savings with the costs of both brand name and generic drugs for every person with Medicare starting January 1, 2006. A typical person with Medicare who has no drug coverage could see his or her total drug spending drop by about 50%. And there is extra help paying for the new drug coverage for people with limited income and resources, so they will have almost no drug expenses (extra help rules are different in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories).

Every person with Medicare, whether they have drug coverage now or not, will have a choice of Medicare prescription drug plans starting in November. Almost a third of all people with Medicare have limited income and resources, so they could qualify for extra help. When they join a Medicare prescription drug plan, they will receive continuous coverage of their drug costs and pay very little out of their pockets.

Apply for Extra Help

From the end of May through August, millions of households with limited income will receive an application in the mail for the extra help from Social Security. If you receive this application, you should fill it out and return it. If you do not receive an application in the mail, you can request one by calling Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. You can also apply for extra help online at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Join a Drug Plan

Even for people who aren't eligible for extra help, a Medicare prescription drug plan can still help save money on drug costs, and can provide peace of mind by insuring against higher drug costs in the future.

Starting November 15, everyone with Medicare can choose a Medicare prescription drug plan. Plans are different, so people will need to compare available plans in their area beginning in October to pick one that meets their needs.

More Information

To get more information on the new Medicare prescription drug coverage, people should visit www.medicare.gov, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), or get free personal counseling from their State Health Insurance Assistance Program. In addition, organizations such as the Access to Benefits Coalition (ABC) are committed to making sure that everyone who qualifies will take advantage of the extra help paying for Medicare's new prescription drug coverage. More information on how ABC will provide assistance with the application for extra help is available at www.accesstobenefits.org.

Social Security Administration Contracts with Pearson to Call Seniors

~ Erika Lawson

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has mailed the [Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs \(Form SSA-1020\)](#) to almost 19 million potentially eligible individuals. As part of its effort to reach all people who qualify for the extra help, SSA has contracted with NCS Pearson, Inc. and its partner, West Corporation, to conduct follow-up telephone calls to individuals who have not responded to the initial mailing of the application. The calls began August 15, 2005 and will continue into November 2005. The contractors will ask questions relating to the seniors needing more information or assistance in completing the application. They will not ask any personal information. If the senior requests assistance, a SSA representative will then call and help them complete the application.

Please remind seniors in your area to not give out any personal information to strangers. If SSA calls they should never ask for social security, bank routing, life insurance policy or credit card numbers. For more information, visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/vendorfollowup/factsheet.htm>.



24th—Abby Griffis

The following dates are upcoming Department of Mental Health Trainings. Anyone is welcome to attend these any of these trainings.

September 20: Dublin Senior Center 1:30 - 3:00

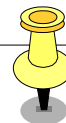
October 3: St. Joseph's Hospital/Savannah 10:00 - 12:00

October 12: West Georgia Workforce Development Center
Griffin, GA 9:00 - 12:00

October 17: Georgia Highlands College/Rome
9:00 - 12:00

The Atlanta Regional Commission is holding numerous trainings for professionals. For more information, please email Georgiacares@atlantaregional.com

For all other trainings, please contact Kristen Barge at 404-657-9588 or via email at kmbarge@dhr.state.ga.us.



Monthly Observances September 2005

Health Aging Month

National Cholesterol Education Month

National Food Safety Awareness Month

Hispanic Heritage Month



Lifelong Planning: New Partners and Possibilities

~ Cynthia Haley

Let's give a hearty welcome to the 11 nonprofits, public agencies, and corporations featured below – our outstanding pioneer partners for the GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning Program. The organizations listed will uphold our mission to objectively educate Georgians about long-term care planning options and provide individuals with helpful consumer protection information.

Partnerships as of September 2005: Aflac, Atlanta Legal Aid, Bank of America, FDIC, Genworth Financial, Georgia Office of the Insurance Commissioner, Georgia Office of the Secretary of State, John Hancock Insurance and Financial Services, Metlife, State Farm Insurance, Wachovia

Our new teammates will enrich the Lifelong Planning program through a variety of exciting activities – by providing guest speakers and trainers, networking opportunities, publications funding, event sponsorship, in-kind donations, publications distribution, expert professional consultation, and more. To explore ways for your Area Agency on Aging to collaborate with these energetic allies, contact Abby Griffis at 404-657-8757 or amgriffis@dhr.state.ga.us.

WELCOME

GeorgiaCares would like to extend a warm welcome to the new staff around the state:

Don Poole: Legacy Link

Kim Vanderwalker: Atlanta Regional Commission

Cindy Pruitt: CSRA

Belinda Jones: Southern Crescent

Valarie Byrd: Lower Chattahoochee

Tina Strassenberg: Southwest Georgia

Ursula Roberson: Southeast Georgia

Healthy Cooking Tips from the American Heart Association

www.americanheart.org

Meats

Even lean meat has fat in it. Here are some ways to reduce the saturated fat in meat:

- Broil rather than pan-fry meats such as hamburger, lamb chops, pork chops and steak.
- Use a rack to drain off fat when broiling, roasting or baking. Instead of basting with drippings, keep meat moist with wine, fruit juices or an acceptable oil-based marinade.
- Cook a day ahead of time. Stews, boiled meat, soup stock or other dishes in which fat cooks into the liquid can be refrigerated. Then the hardened fat can be removed from the top.
- Make gravies after the fat has hardened and can be removed from the liquid.
- When a recipe calls for browning the meat first, try browning it under the broiler instead of in a pan.

Vegetables

Add herbs and spices to make vegetables even tastier. For example, these combinations add new and subtle flavors:

- Rosemary with peas, cauliflower and squash
- Oregano with zucchini
- Dill with green beans
- Marjoram with Brussels sprouts, carrots and spinach
- Basil with tomatoes

Start with a small quantity (1/8 to 1/2 teaspoon to a package of frozen vegetables), then let your own and your family's taste be your guide. Chopped parsley and chives, sprinkled on just before serving, also enhance the flavor of many vegetables.

Try cooking vegetables in a tiny bit of vegetable oil, adding a little water during cooking if needed, or use a vegetable oil spray. Only 1 to 2 teaspoons of oil is enough for a package of frozen vegetables that serves four. Place in a skillet with tight cover, season, and cook over a very low heat until vegetables are done.

Modifying recipes

To control the amount and kind of fat (particularly saturated fat) and dietary cholesterol you eat:

- Select lean cuts of meat and trim off all visible fat before cooking.
- Serve moderate portions, and try "low-meat" dishes featuring pasta, rice, beans and/or vegetables.
- Use cooking methods that require little or no fat — boil, broil, bake, roast, poach, steam, saute, stir-fry or microwave.
- Replace saturated fats with healthier substitutes. For example, when your own recipe calls for butter, lard, bacon, bacon fat or chicken fat, use margarine that contains no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per 1 tablespoon, or unsaturated vegetable oil.

HAPPY COOKING!





1-800-669-8387



Director, Jennie Deese

LLP Coordinator, Abby Griffis

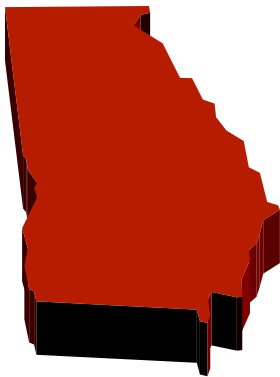
LLP Coordinator, Cynthia Haley

Program Consultant, Kristen Barge

Program Consultant, Patsy McDoodle

SHIP Coordinator, Vicki Mikels

SMP Coordinator, Erika Lawson



What's Happening Around the State?

September 20:	WSB Service2Seniors Metting Atlanta, GA 11:30
September 25 - 27:	Georgia Gerontology Society Conference Savannah, GA
September 29:	Georgia Academy of Independent Pharmacies Town Hall Meeting Statesboro, GA 7:30 - 10:00 p.m.