

Fall 2007

Silverwire Newsletter

Lenard W. Kaye

University of Maine, len.kaye@maine.edu

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Silverwire

Vol. 5, No. 2 Late Summer/Fall 2007

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

Center on Aging Wins EPA Grant for Pilot Drug-Return Program

The UMaine Center on Aging has received a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to launch a first-in-the-nation pharmaceuticals-return program to help keep tons of medications out of rivers, streams and groundwater.

The CoA pilot will start, implement and evaluate a mail-back plan to remove unused over-the-counter and prescription medications from homes. Typically, unused, unneeded or expired medications are flushed down toilets or thrown in the trash, and ultimately can make their way into the environment. Since compounds in many medications can be destroyed only through incineration, they often pass through landfill and wastewater treatment plants and end up in rivers, lakes and streams.

In the United States and England, studies have shown that pharmaceuticals and common personal health care products in the environment can cause genetic changes in fish and wildlife. Unused, unneeded or unwanted drugs stored in homes also can wind up in the hands of children exploring medicine cabinets, or thieves who steal and sell pain medications, muscle relaxants and other drugs.

The Center on Aging will carry out the project with assistance from numerous partners including the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group (MBSG). The study group, administered by the Center on Aging, is a consortium of lawmakers, policy makers, and professionals in health care, geriatric care, law enforcement, social work, private industry and other disciplines pressing for new ways to curtail the storage or casual disposal of potentially dangerous medications. Dr. Stevan Gressitt, medical director of the Northeast Occupational Exchange in Bangor, is the co-principal investigator for the grant and a co-founder of the MBSG.

The Maine project, one of only two funded by the EPA, will include an inventory of the types and quantities of drugs being returned. Inventory data could prove useful to the medical community in changing its prescribing practices to reduce the incidence of unused medications. In addition, the pilot project will test the effectiveness of an educational campaign about the hazards to life, health and the environment presented by improper storage and disposal of unused medications.

More information about the project

can be found on the Center on Aging Website at www.umaine.edu/mainecenteronaging.

In addition to the Center on Aging, the EPA and the MBSG, other project partners include the U.S. Postal Service, Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, Maine Departments of Environmental Protection and Health, Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, Maine Offices of Elder Services, Substance Abuse and the Attorney General, the Maine Pharmacy Association, Maine RSVP Programs, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at UMaine, National Council on Patient Information and Education, Northern New England Poison Center, Northeast Occupational Exchange and the Villanova University Center for the Environment.

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Lenard W. Kaye, Director

Jennifer Crittenden, Editor

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The Center on Aging is an interdisciplinary research center reporting to the Vice President for Research and associated with the University of Maine's School of Social Work and the College of Business, Public Policy, and Health. Our mission is to promote and facilitate activities on aging in the areas of education, research and evaluation, and community service, in order to maximize the quality of life of older citizens and their families in Maine and beyond.

Center on Aging

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Camden Hall

25 Texas Avenue

Bangor, Maine 04401-4324

Tel: (207) 262-7920

Fax: (207) 262-7921

E-mail: info@mainecenteronaging.org

www.mainecenteronaging.org

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From the Director

The relocation of the administrative offices of the Center on Aging from the University of Maine at Orono campus to the Bangor community has both practical and symbolic impact. On the practical side, moving from one office to another requires dealing with the expected barrage of administrative details – packing and unpacking files and more files; moving furniture; arranging for new telephone numbers, mail service, computer networking and related office support services; and much more. All of that is to be expected. I think, however, it is the symbolic and emotional meaning of Center relocation that will have the greatest meaning in the long-term for us and those we work with.



Lenard W. Kaye

I am convinced that our move off the physical campus in Orono into the neighborhoods of Bangor will prove to signal a new phase in the evolution of Center programming and activities. Yes, we will be moving into a new facility and a first-rate working environment that offers us more physical space. Yes, our new offices will allow all staff and students associated with the Center, for the first time, to come together under one roof and perform as a cohesive whole including the research, evaluation, education and training arms of the Center, RSVP of Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington, and Hancock counties, and Penobscot Valley Senior College. Yes, we will now have on-site access to first rate technology and remote communications capacity. Yes, parking should be easier to maneuver for both ourselves and those who visit us. But perhaps more importantly, we will now be physically closer than we have ever been to the community organizations and individuals we serve. And the resources of UMaine's flagship campus will be all the more accessible through the Center to the citizens of the region and state.

Our direct association with Maine's flagship university remains unchanged. And that is, of course, as it should be. But we now have the unprecedented opportunity to interact all the more directly and productively with other important organizational entities in the community including our new neighbor, the University College at Bangor. While we have stepped off the beautiful Orono campus, we find ourselves stepping into the bustling and invigorating environs of Bangor.

The move to Texas Avenue has both physical and emotional meaning to all of us at the Center on Aging and you can be sure that we look forward to continuing to serve Maine's older adults and their families with renewed commitment and energy.

COA TO HOST PRESCRIPTION DRUG CONFERENCE THIS FALL

What are you doing for Halloween? Hopefully your answer is attending the Center on Aging's exciting fall conference which will be held Wednesday October 31st and Thursday November 1st at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland. The conference will focus on two very important and timely health and safety topics particularly relevant to older adults. The first topic being the disposal of unwanted medications in safe and environmentally responsible ways and the second topic is prescribing practices and health risks of the benzodiazepine class of drugs, such as Valium, Xanax, and other tranquilizers frequently prescribed to older adults. Traditionally those that prescribe medications and those that handle hazardous waste are typically not sitting down together to collaborate because of the drastic differences in their professions. In light of the reality that medications are

accumulating with great frequency in the household medicine cabinets of older adults, we feel that it is important to bring these two groups together to look at how to safely get rid of unwanted medicine and how to prevent its accumulation in the first place.

The conference aims to bring professionals and community members together from a wide range of backgrounds to help address the overwhelming problem of drugs accumulating in households. This phenomenon poses significant health and safety risks such as accidental poisonings, drug misuse and abuse, and increased crime victimization. There are also well documented studies that show the significant impact that flushing unwanted medications has on the environment, namely drinking water supplies and marine life.

The Center on Aging has received a competitive grant from the fed-

eral EPA through the agency's Aging Initiative to pilot test a state wide drug return program using prepaid mailers provided to older adults. A panel discussion involving Center on Aging staff, federal EPA officials, US Postal Service Representatives, and other Aging Initiative grantees will take place on the first day of the conference.

This conference marks the 5th annual meeting of the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group and the 4th annual Unused Drug Return Conference. Please mark your calendars for October 31st and November 1st in Portland. Early reservations are strongly recommended, to do so call the Holiday Inn by the Bay at 1-800-345-5050. For further information or to request a conference bulletin please contact Jason Charland at 581-3604 or jason.charland@umit.maine.edu.

MASTER'S LEVEL COURSE IN CLINICAL PRACTICE TO BE OFFERED FALL 2007

The Center on Aging's Geriatric Practicum Partnership Program Coordinator, Marjie Harris LCSW, will be teaching a course for advanced year MSW students and MSW's and clinicians practicing in the community during the fall semester. Expert guest speakers will supplement class discussions and readings. For more information, contact Marjie at 207-581-3570.

Course Description

SWK 597: Advanced Topics in Social Work: Clinical Practice with Older Adults (Orono) Thursdays 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm This course will focus on clinical social work practice with the geriatric population. Common mental health concerns of a diverse cohort of older adults will be explored with emphasis on the unique characteristics to consider when working with this population. Areas covered will include assessment, common DSM IV diagnoses, chronic illness and end of life issues, psychopharmacology, substance abuse, and counseling considerations. The objective of the course is to prepare students to provide culturally sensitive interventions around mental health concerns of the rapidly growing population of clients over 60 years of age.

ISSUES OF RETIREMENT PREPAREDNESS: INTRODUCTION TO FINANCIAL GERONTOLOGY AND THE WEALTH SPAN

BY NANCY FORSTER-HOLT

Retirement is an industrialized, 20th century concept. The existence of an administered, mandatory retirement age is a systemic tool, administered by government to move workers through the financial and human capital life cycles. Data already suggest an end to the post-war trend of earlier retirement, and a shift of risk and responsibility back to the individual. The American Institute of Financial Gerontologists (AIFG) suggests that the responsibility and risk for successful retirement will shift fully, actually, full circle, back to the model of the 1900s, where the individual was fully responsible for retirement.

With varying views on work and leisure, retirement is established as a defining event in the work life. People consider retirement far before health declines. From a systemic view, the ages that have formed the framework for thinking about retirement come from administered definitions for: tax consequences of IRAs (59 ½, 70 ½), effective age for services under the Older Americans Act (60), and the eligibility ages of 62 and 65 for Social Security and Medicare, which will be rising soon, to 67. As explained from an individual perspective, retirement decisions are often household decisions, and vary according to health, family considerations, and the meanings of work and leisure, which vary among cohorts. Though retirement age is a highly individual decision, homogeneity exists among age cohorts, suggesting generational attitudes toward retirement preparedness.

The standardized assumption of retirement at age 65 without allowing for individual differences can result in significant overestimation or underestimation of the adequacy of retirement wealth. (Monalto, et al; Munnell). This once-defining event, retirement, has become a process, often spanning a few years (Cutler). A study by AARP revealed that 16% of those surveyed felt they could fully stop working at their retirement. Fifty-eight percent estimated that they would continue with some sort of part time work, which experts have termed, "bridge employment."

In the Financial Life Cycle theory, individuals (households) are considered to move through stages of Accumulation, followed by a Harvest period. That is, there is an early earning period, where there are generally high expenses and low earnings, a later earning period, where earnings have increased, but the household sustains high expenditures such as child rearing, a peak earning period, and retirement (Ando & Modigliani). The Financial Life Cycle theory translates into financial planning tools and discussion points for asset allocation decisions (Hurst and Lusardi).

The concept of having enough funds for successful retirement for wage-and-salary workers is being challenged both the systemic and individual fronts. Pressures on retirement preparedness from the systemic side are the uncertainties of Social Security and Medicare including funding and administered retirement dates. Pressures and complexities on the individual front are a shorter Accumulation Phase, as people delay work for education, and as people also delay life events such as marriage and childbirth. There is also a longer Harvest Period, as people confront the probability of longer lives and the possibility of rapidly accumulating medical costs brought on by age-related needs. Too, pre-retirees are entering the Harvest Period with record levels of indebtedness (Munnell).

A storm is brewing, as risk and responsibility for successful retirement planning shift to individuals. There is a significant shortfall in knowledge required to navigate the complexities of accumulation. Lusardi and Mitchell found widespread financial illiteracy among American adults. Their work showed that many households are unfamiliar with even the most basic economic concepts needed to make sensible savings and investment decisions.

CoA is on the Move!

The Center on Aging has relocated to the following address:



CoA's New Home, Camden Hall

UMaine Center on Aging
Camden Hall
25 Texas Avenue
Bangor, Maine 04401-4324
Phone: 207-262-7920
Fax: 207-262-7921

Please join us for an open house on Friday, September 28, 2007
3rd Floor of Camden Hall, 3:00-5:00 pm,

GPPP WELCOMES PROGRAM OFFICIALS AND NEW STUDENTS IN FALL 2007

Staff from the New York Academy's Social Work Leadership Institute will be at the university on September 20 and 21 to conduct focus groups and individual interviews with our students, field instructors, and faculty. The visit is part of a qualitative research project being done with 10 funded PPP sites and 3 unfunded schools. Through conducting focus groups and individual interviews, the aim of the research is to gather information that can be used to promote the PPP model.

Four students have been chosen to participate in the GPPP during the 2007-8 year. The students were selected after an application and interview process. For the first time, we welcome a student from Aroostook County to the program. The four students are Ann Donovan-Fortier, Kathryn Eckert, Priscilla Jewell, and Kristin Robinson. They bring a wide variety of experiences and a passion for working with older adults. Congratulations to all!

2007-2008 will be the last year of formal funding of the grant from the John A Hartford Foundation. In order to continue the GPPP, we will be depending upon other sources of funding, both individual and foundations. For more information about how you can help us achieve sustainability, please contact Lenard Kaye at 207-581-3483 or by e-mail at len.kaye@umit.maine.edu.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW TO BE CONDUCTED FOR ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Work is about to begin to make recommendations on how the state's Adult Protective Services (APS) can maximize the effectiveness of their case review procedures. APS is a division of the Office of Elder Services (OES) and provides services to protect incapacitated or dependent adults in danger of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Center on Aging will be looking at policies, procedures, and best practices from other states to examine how processes can be improved to streamline the case review process to insure high quality services and promote positive client outcomes. Each year the APS unit fields thousands of calls and has a hotline that is operated 24 hours a day. In 2006 there were over 3000 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation that

GERIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM PROJECT MOVING FORWARD

Last spring *Silverwire* reported on the geriatric mental health projects that the UMaine Center on Aging completed for the Joint Advisory Committee on Select Services for Older Adults (JAC) and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. One of those projects was the development of a 5-hour training curriculum designed to educate front line direct care workers in long term care about issues in geriatric mental health. The Department of Health and Human Service's Best Practices Committee has reviewed the proposed curriculum and has engaged the Center on Aging in developing a Train-the-Trainer style Teaching Guide in order to pilot test the curriculum at selected facilities.

RSVP STATION SUPERVISORS GATHER FOR TRAINING

Volunteer station supervisors, representing RSVP partner non-profit organizations, gathered at the University of Maine on May 18th to learn more about RSVP and how to best utilize RSVP resources. Volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition, as well as marketing to those who are aging were some of the topics covered. Susan Kaye of Packard, Judd Kaye Strategic Marketing Group was on-hand to discuss volunteerism, marketing and baby boomers. Paula Burnett, RSVP Director, assisted supervisors in learning how to utilize the RSVP website effectively for reporting volunteer time, retrieval of forms and marketing her program to potential volunteers via the internet.



Paula Burnett assists Evelyn Clisham in using RSVP web-based tools.



Volunteer station supervisors listen to a presentation during the RSVP training.

JASON CHARLAND TO SERVE AS RSVP PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR HANCOCK AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

I am truly honored to have been recently named as Program Coordinator for the UMaine Center



Jason Charland
CoA Program Associate

on Aging's R S V P e f f o r t s Downeast. I have been involved with a number of groups in the region over the past few years and look forward to building on those relationships and developing new ones. I am very much looking forward to meeting the current RSVP volunteers and volunteer site coordinators to learn from their experiences and listen to their needs. I also welcome you to contact me if you are interested in volunteering in Hancock or Washington Counties or if you know of an organization that may be interested in linking up with RSVP. Please feel free to give me a call at 581-3604, drop me a line by mail (5723 DPC, Orono, ME 04469), or send me an email at jason.charland@umit.maine.edu.

RYO TAKAHASHI VISITS UMAINE

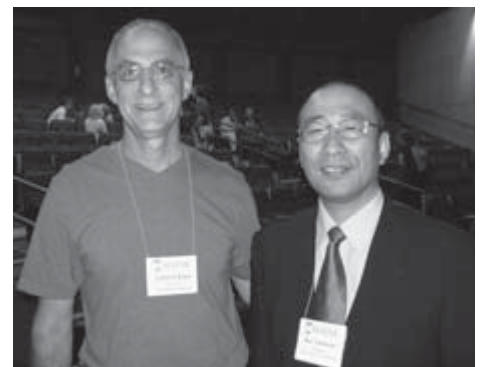
. What can we learn about life and death from Leonardo Da Vinci? Ryo Takahashi, Ph.D., the Director of the

Center for Gerontology at the Nippon Care-Fit Service Association in Tokyo, Japan, recently presented a workshop entitled Death Education and the Self Life Review: Learning from the Life of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Ryo suggests that the process of aging be considered in all aspects of the arts and humanities. He believes that art helps us to understand life and cited examples of how Da Vinci put this into practice through journaling his observations of the world around him.

Ryo added that people who study gerontology should utilize an interdisciplinary approach and focus on the entire life span. He asked workshop participants to consider a series of thought-provoking questions aimed at challenging ideas about one's own death, which he felt would ultimately lead to increased self-awareness in life.

His presentation was part of the conference Improvisation for Lasting Change: Setting the Stage for Creative Collaboration in Social Work Practice, Teaching, and Research, held at the University of Maine August 3-5, 2007. Dr. Lenard Kaye facilitated the workshop.



Len Kaye and Ryo Takahashi at the UMaine School of Social Work Improvisation for Lasting Change Conference

RYO VISIT (continued from page 4...)



Left: Ryo Takahashi lectures during the the Improvisation for Lasting Change Conference in Orono.

Right: Gerontologists gather after the Improvisation for Lasting Change Conference. Back (L-R): Len Kaye, CoA Director, Dr. Matt Janicki, CoA Research Professor. Front (L-R): Ryo Takahashi, Director of the Center for Gerontology at the Nippon Care-Fit Service Association in Tokyo, Harvey Sterns, Akron University professor, Ronni Sterns, President of Creative Action LLC.



QUICK RESOURCES: AGE PAGES

Do you know about the Age Pages? These are informational brochures on a number of topics, written in easy-to-read language, available free from the National Institute on Aging, at www.nia.nih.gov, or at 1-800-222-2225. Each brochure is devoted to one topic, including depression, memory loss, arthritis, high blood pressure, stroke, menopause, HIV/AIDS and older people, legal planning, and many more. Each brochure includes a list of resources for further information. These provide great basic background information for professionals, direct care staff, and clients.

SPOTLIGHT ON PRODUCTIVE AGING: JEAN ALDERMAN, HAMMOND STREET SENIOR CENTER VOLUNTEER



Jean Alderman

When asked to report her favorite thing about volunteering at the Hammond Street Senior Center in Bangor, Jean Alderman is clearly at a loss for words, “It’s just everything”, she states, “I just can’t get enough of this place.” Jean, who has been a member and volunteer at the center for the past 4 years, originally became involved after her husband had passed away and she moved to the Bangor area to be closer to family. Following major life changes such as these, many older adults commonly find themselves beginning to feel depressed or lonely. However Jean immediately recognized these feelings and took action to overcome them. “Since I’ve started coming here my whole attitude has changed. I really enjoy the senior center here. You have somebody to talk to, something to do... even health wise, everything has improved so much.” From the moment she walked in the door of Hammond Street Senior Center, Jean was immediately impressed with not only the number of different activities available to her, but the quality of the programs as well.

“There is just so much to do here”, she states, “I could probably come here 5 days a week and still not have time to do everything.” Jean acknowledges that some older adults might be nervous about coming to a place like HSCC for the first time; however she encourages all older adults to try it, as there clearly seems to be an activity offered to suit everyone. “The staff and members here make it such a wonderful place, they treat you as if they’ve known you for a long time.” Clearly Jean is an important part of why this attitude at the center is felt so strongly. Her willingness to overcome difficult life transitions and help others in the process is an accomplishment to be admired by all.



Maine Gerontological Society's "100 New Members Recruitment Campaign



Please become one of the 100 new members of the MGS who will join our ranks during our current recruitment campaign. As a member of the Maine Gerontological Society, you will network with other professionals in the field of aging who share concerns about an aging Maine.

Your membership will provide other benefits as well:

- *Opportunities to present at MGS professional conferences & workshops*
- *Access to the MGSE-Newsletter*
- *Access to remote teleconferences and symposia*
- *Educational program discounts*
- *Access to the MGS List Serve*
- *Invitation to various educational events*

*"A diverse and constructive
voice speaking to the
challenges of an aging
Maine"*

