

Fall 2005

## Silverwire

University of Maine Center on Aging

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# Silverwire

Vol. 3, No. 3 Fall 2005

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

## New Funding Opportunities Highlight Successful Partnerships

The Center on Aging (CoA) has received two new grants that highlight continued successful partnerships between the University of Maine and community agencies.

First, the CoA is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$30,000 grant from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Substance Abuse to measure the prevalence of binge and chronic drinking among people over age 65. A special emphasis will be placed on determining lifestyle or cultural factors that contribute to alcohol abuse in older adults in Maine. The findings of this two-year study will be used to develop creative and culturally sensitive prevention measures for this segment of the population.

"This is a very exciting project that is going to investigate the very severe and neglected problem of alcohol abuse among older adults," says CoA Director, Lenard Kaye. The study will be statewide in nature but will focus on Hancock County, which has a disproportionately high percentage of older alcohol abusers compared to other regions, according to a 2002 Health Planning Report for the Hancock region performed by Eastern Maine Healthcare. Heavy drinking, particularly when mixed with a multitude of prescription drugs that many elders take to stabilize their health, can lead to mental and physical health complications.

Center on Aging research associates will gather information from more than two dozen community and state agencies, organizations and institutions that work with older adults. The two-year research project involves collaboration with the Healthy Hancock Coalition, a group of community health coalitions in Bucksport, Ellsworth, Blue Hill, and Mount Desert Island committed to improving the quality of life of Mainers in their region of the county. In addition to using written questionnaires, the Center on Aging will administer as many as a dozen focus groups to query a broad variety of people who work or live with the elderly,



Nancy Kelly will oversee student placements for the Practicum Partnership Program.

including physicians, health care professionals, families, town officials, educators, and clergy.

The CoA, in partnership with the School of Social Work, has also received funding for a second collaborative program that focuses on training social work students in gerontology. The three-year grant from the John Hartford Foundation in New York, under the New York Academy of Medicine's Practicum Partnership Program, will allow the CoA and the School of Social Work to significantly increase the range of practical and clinical experiences for a select number of graduate students in the social work program interested in issues of aging.

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## Silverwire

Vol. 3, No. 3 Fall 2005

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The Center on Aging is an interdisciplinary research center associated with the School of Social Work in the University of Maine's 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.

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## From the Director

The 2005-06 academic year is upon us. While the fall semester sets the stage for dramatically cooler weather to arrive in our part of the country, the organizational atmosphere at the Center will surely be heating up. The largest roster yet of undergraduate and graduate students have joined us, infusing their enthusiasm and desire to learn in to a wide range of research and evaluation, education, and community consultation projects at the Center. Exciting new events and projects are just getting underway.

I want to take this opportunity to bid farewell to Leah Ruffin, who served as the Center's Senior Research Associate for the past two years. She has moved on to assume the position of program director at a small group home for adults with mental illness in Bangor, Maine. Her contributions to the Center were invaluable and she will be greatly missed. I also want to wish all good things for Jane Harris Bartley who is leaving the Center staff to join the Ellsworth Maine School District. Jane did a fantastic job for the past three years in her role as program director of the Center's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Searches are underway to fill each of these important positions at the Center.

Visiting our website ([www.mainecenteronaging.org](http://www.mainecenteronaging.org)) remains an excellent way to stay informed of new program developments and special events at the Center. Two new initiatives worthy of note are the newly funded Maine Office of Substance Abuse study investigating chronic and binge drinking among older adults in rural Maine and an innovative rotational field learning program for graduate social work students made possible with support from the New York Academy of Medicine and the John Hartford Foundation. Please be aware also of an important international conference organized by the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group on prescription drug use and abuse that is scheduled for October 11th and 12th in Bangor. We will also be holding community press conferences on the results of the Maine HealthAccess Foundation-funded study of the chronic health transportation needs of rural elders in Bangor, Machias, and Ellsworth, Maine.

I close by heartily welcoming Robert Kennedy to the presidency of the University of Maine. Bob has been a loyal supporter of the Center since its inception, recognizing the responsibility that a public university has for responding to the needs of an aging citizenry. The Center also warmly welcomes Noelle Merrill to the executive directorship of the Eastern Agency on Aging, replacing our good colleague Roberta Downey and the installation of Eric Buch as president of United Way of Eastern Maine, replacing Jeff Wahlstrom. The Center looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively and creatively with both of these influential and respected organizations in the years ahead.



Leonard W. Kaye

## A VISTA PROFILE FOR SILVERWIRE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

How many of us sit at our desks and think about how wonderful retirement will be? Finally having the time to do all of the things we put off or dreamed of. For Jon and Gretchen Lee retirement started out that way. Jon and Gretchen were able to retire early and work on one of their dreams, building a log cabin from scratch, in the midst of a national forest in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It took them seven years to complete. According to Jon, once they completed their cabin they realized how boring retirement can be. While searching through the possibilities of what they could do next they learned about AmeriCorps\*VISTA. According to Jon and Gretchen, "Once we decided to volunteer, we wanted to use our time to learn about different areas of the country but we wanted to do more than the typical two week vacation."

They spent their first year in West Virginia: Gretchen worked on a literacy program for at-risk children and Jon worked on a business incubator project. Gretchen and Jon decided to serve a second year elsewhere and they chose Maine. In December 2004 they began their second year of service: Jon is with Senior Spectrum in Augusta and Gretchen is with Rural Community Action Ministry in Leeds. Some of the issues they are addressing are TRIAD development and expansion, consumer awareness and elder abuse. They are having great success at their agencies and in our communities. Gretchen has been helping lead the creation of a TRIAD in rural Androscoggin County. Jon feels the highlight of his year has been the founding of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) to address elder abuse. The MDT will bring social service agencies, the medical profession, and legal services representatives together to focus on this serious problem. The Lees have also helped another of our A\*VISTA members form a TRIAD in the Dover-Foxcroft region.

The Lees are on the leading edge of the baby boomers who are becoming actively involved with the volunteer sector. "Another point that we think is important is that we are hardly unique. There are legions of healthy, vibrant retired people who are looking for an opportunity to make a contribution. With the right approach, they could swell the AmeriCorps ranks and bring their valued experience,



AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior Sense members Gretchen & Jon Lee

enthusiasm, and energy to addressing poverty in our country."

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to share about their experience they said, "Finally and most significantly, we have relished the opportunity to give back to a society that has given us so much over the years. But even more, at the end of each day we realize that what we have given is so much less than we have received in return. That, by itself, is an unexpected reward."



**SAVE THE DATE  
FRIDAY, NOV 4**

### Grandfamilies and Cultural Diversity

*Co-sponsored by Families and Children Together  
and UMaine Center on Aging*

This full-day workshop will focus on recognizing the role of cultural differences when working with kinship families. John Bear Mitchell, a Natives Studies teacher at the University of Maine, is the featured morning speaker. Susan Nichols, Executive Director for the UMaine Office of Equal Opportunity, will moderate the afternoon panel discussion. FMI call Noreen Peters at Families and Children Together (npeters@familiesandchildren.org) (207) 941-2347.

# OLDER WORKERS: MAINE'S UNDERUSED RESOURCE

*"We need a transformation of work as profound as that which occurred when women flooded the labor market."*

—Robert J. Samuelson, *Washington Post*

By Elizabeth Johns\*

By now it is common knowledge that we live in a society that's aging, thanks to the oversized Baby Boom generation, many of whom are now in their mid-fifties and heading into their retirement years, followed by much smaller cohorts in Generations X and Y. This demographic shift has particular relevance for Maine, where many ambitious twenty- and thirty-somethings emigrate for education and job opportunities, and the immigration of young adults is negligible. In the 2000–2004 period, Maine's population in the 55+ age group increased by nearly 38,000, while those under 55 rose by just 4,500 (Maine Dept. of Labor, n.d.). Earlier this year, Maine became the oldest state in the nation measured in median age (40.6 years).

One implication of these demographic changes, if the state is to meet economic growth projections, is that employers will be challenged to make optimum use of existing labor resources. In a climate where policy makers are looking for ways to stem the youth "brain drain" and to encourage higher levels of education and training among all Mainers, the potential represented by older workers is also gaining increased attention.

Some economic strains are already apparent. Coastal Maine businesses have experienced labor shortages, notably in the hospitality industry. Shortages have also appeared in rural areas, which have been particularly affected by the exodus of young adults. Statewide, certain sectors, especially the health care industry, have had difficulty filling job vacancies. Making greater use of older workers, therefore, has the potential to be a win-win proposition for employers and workers alike. Workers who delay retirement can benefit from continuing social interactions at work, as well as from the mental stimulus of staying engaged and challenged, and a continuing source of income is always welcome. Employers of older workers, meanwhile, are often pleased with their mature judgment, dependability, and fund of valuable experience. Some Maine employers—notably L.L. Bean, Hannaford Supermarkets, and Microdyne—have already discovered the benefits of hiring older workers, and have received public recognition for it. The Maine Employment Service, through its 23 statewide Career Centers, even has older worker specialists on hand to match interested employers with suitable job candidates.

But more active steps will be needed before Mainers of traditional retirement age are persuaded to stay at work in larger numbers. Recall that just a decade ago early retirement was in vogue, with many employers looking for ways to downsize and "right size" their businesses, and shedding disproportionate numbers of older workers in the process. Many older adults embraced the early retirement promise. It will take concerted efforts to convey the message to both parties that times have changed.

Aspects of workplace culture and practices may need to change as well. Sadly, some employers retain outmoded perceptions of older workers—that their health is poor, that they are resistant to change, or slow to learn—and some workplace cultures are inhospitable to older workers. Alexander and Kaye (1997) have found ageism to be a "subtle, yet seemingly intractable phenomenon in the workplace" (p. 126). Companies may need to adopt positive incentives to keep older adults at work, such as flexible hours and assignments, access to training opportunities, attention to ergonomic issues, and provision of benefits such as health insurance. Employers who have come to think of older workers as low-cost candidates for routine, unchallenging positions may need to upgrade their job descriptions as other employers begin to compete for these increasingly valued workers.

Because Maine has achieved the distinction of becoming the nation's oldest state, our policy makers and employers are being challenged to create and adopt new solutions for a changing workforce. Innovative new practices designed and tested in Maine may well become a model that the rest of the country can use. After all: the whole country is aging. Maine just got here first.

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\*Elizabeth Johns was a 2005 summer intern at the Center on Aging. She is a Ph.D. student in gerontology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

## GOVERNOR'S SERVICE AWARDS

Each year the Maine Volunteer Connection and the Maine Commission for Community Service hold a ceremony to present the Governor's Service Awards. One group of volunteers who were recognized in Augusta on April 25, 2005 at the Hall of Flags consisted of those who had served 500 or more hours in 2004. RSVP nominated 30 volunteers to receive this recognition from Governor Baldacci. One of the 30 included RSVP member Mary Hunter of Bangor with over 2,700 hours of service last year.

The Masters of Ceremonies for the event were Irv Marsters of the Bangor Letter Shop and Color Center and Joni Averill of the Bangor Daily News. Irv has been affiliated with The Maine Volunteer Connection for several years. He is an RSVP volunteer and current chairperson of the RSVP Advisory Council. Joni Averill's newspaper column "The Standpipe" has helped numerous non-profit organizations, including RSVP, to recruit and recognize local volunteer efforts. Joni will be the keynote speaker at the 3rd Annual RSVP Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon to be held October 18, 2005.

What would a Governor's Service Award ceremony be without Kay Lebowitz? She is a longtime RSVP volunteer and Advisory Council member whose dedication to serving her community and state is extraordinary. Kay regularly attends this event to recognize the volunteer accomplishments of others.



From left to right: Chevelle Marshall (RSVP Coord.), Shireen Tilley (Corporation for National & Community Service), Kay Lebowitz (RSVP volunteer & Advisory Council member), Paula Burnett, (RSVP Coord.) and Jane Harris-Bartley (RSVP Director).



From left to right: RSVP Advisory Council Members Kay Lebowitz and Irv Marsters, and Bangor Daily News columnist, Joni Averill.

The Maine Partners for Elder Protection (MePEP) Project presents

## FREE LUNCH AND LEARN

### Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation: *The Sentinel Role of the Health Care Provider*



**Oct. 26, 2005 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm**

Dover-Foxcroft Family Practice,  
Dover-Foxcroft

**Nov. 7, 2005 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.**

Milliken Medical Center, Island Falls

**Jan. 18, 2006 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.**

Dexter Family Medicine, Dexter

**Feb. 7, 2006 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.**

Penobscot Community Health Center, Bangor

**April 11, 2006 7:30-8:30 a.m**

Norumbega Medical, Evergreen Woods, Bangor



### LUNCH PROVIDED

### AAFP, ANA & CME

### CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS APPLIED FOR

THE MAINE PARTNERS FOR ELDER PROTECTION (MEPEP) PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE MAINE HEALTH ACCESS FOUNDATION. Partners include the University of Maine Center on Aging, the Eastern Agency on Aging, Adult Protective Services, the Elder Abuse Institute of Maine, the Maine Health Alliance affiliates' Dexter Family Practice, Dover-Foxcroft Family Medicine, Milliken Medical Center, Penobscot Community Health Center, and Eastern Maine Health affiliate Norumbega Medical Evergreen Woods.

## STUDENT WINNERS

Three student groups received the Center on Aging's annual Gero-Rich mini-grants for excellence in Gerontological research this spring. The winners of the Annual round of student grant monies presented their findings at the College of Business, Public Policy and Health Student Research and Project Exposition on April 14, 2005. Congratulations to all the student winners.



Above: Exploring Client Age Characteristics of Premature Termination from Therapy. Lisa M. Croce, Annie Hamel



Above: Concerns of the Elderly and Disabled While on a Waiting List for Homecare Services. Meghan Jewell, Michelle Sheldon



Left: Assessing Knowledge of Aging and Bias Towards Older Adults: A Test of Three Formats of Palmore's Second Facts on Aging Quiz. Jennifer Crittenden and Jane Sawyer. Not shown Sandra Holk and Kristi Schors

Grants, continued from page 1

The grant was one of only 10 awarded throughout the country. Nancy Kelly, the School of Social Work's field coordinator and program co-director with Kaye, will oversee student placements. "It's certainly a very prestigious opportunity we're being given here," she says.

Three graduate students this fall and four students in each of the next two years will be assigned to specific agencies for concentrated clinical work two days a week during nine-month internships and spend the third day rotating among as many as 10 social service agencies. Students in the Practicum Partnership Program will work specifically with older people, in addition to attending seminar discussions and workshops that will include representatives from the cooperating social work agencies in the community. The rotation exposes the students to more issues affecting the care of elders, ranging from legal, mental health, planning and advocacy, wellness and health promotion.

Participating agencies include: the Maine Center for Integrated Rehabilitation; the Family Practice Center of Eastern Maine; the Acadia Hospital; Brewer Rehab and Living Center; Charlotte White Center; the United Way of Eastern Maine; Hancock County Homecare and Hospice; Philips Strickland House; Dirigo Pines Retirement Community; STARS-Senior Treatment and Respite Services; Bangor VA Clinic; Spruce Run; DHHS-Adult Protective Services; and the Eastern Agency on Aging.

Marjie Harris, Adjunct Professor at the School of Social Work, and

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## RECENT CENTER ON AGING STAFF AND ASSOCIATE PUBLICATIONS

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- Relatives as Parents Project (RAPP) authors Kinship article series (available online at [www.mainecenteronaging.org](http://www.mainecenteronaging.org))
  - "Working with Kinship Families: Reflections of a Clinician" by Bonny Dodson, LCSW
  - "What is Support to Relative Parents?" by Sue Burgess, LCPC
  - "A Grandmother Describes Her Adjustment to Parenting Her Grandchildren" by Anonymous

## EASTERN MAINE TRANSPORTATION COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO BE RELEASED THIS FALL

The Eastern Maine Transportation Collaborative (EMTC) received a grant to study the transportation needs of chronically ill patients 65 years and older in Penobscot, Washington and Hancock counties. This Maine HealthAccess Foundation (MeHAF) grant was made to Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems on behalf of the EMTC.

Agencies represented in the Collaborative include Alpha One, Bangor Area Transit, Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, Bucksport Community Health Advisory Committee, Community Connections, Downeast Transportation, Eastern Agency on Aging, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, EMMC Family Practice Center, EMMC Dialysis Unit, Island Connections, Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Health Alliance, Millinocket Regional Hospital, Mount Desert Island Hospital, My Friends Place, Penobscot Community Health Center, Penobscot Valley Hospital, Penquis CAP, St. Joseph Healthcare, University of Maine Center on Aging, University of Maine Cooperative Extension Senior Companion Program, United Way of Eastern Maine, and Washington-Hancock Community Agency.

The Collaborative has wrapped up the assessment phase that measured the transportation experiences, challenges and needs of chronically ill patients 65 years and older in the tri-county region. The EMTC will release specific recommendations and programs to the public at upcoming press

conferences to be held: Friday, 10/14/05 Penquis CAP, Bangor, 10-11 a.m. Wednesday, 10/19/05 Ellsworth City Hall, 11a.m.-Noon. Wednesday, 10/26/05 University of Maine Machias, Science Building (Room 102) 1-2 p.m. Please RSVP by calling United Way at 941-2800 or e-mail [janeto@unitedwayem.org](mailto:janeto@unitedwayem.org). The aims of the recommendations are to ensure the best possible community transportation system in Eastern Maine. The goal is to help all people access services and opportunities that fit their needs and lifestyles, with emphasis on the transportation needs of the chronically ill.

### PUBLIC CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS SAFETY FOR ELDERS

"We are losing our elders to an epidemic rarely talked about or even acknowledged. An epidemic that leaves some ashamed, some afraid and too many dead" (American Academy of Family Physicians, 10/18/99). Older adults who are abused or mistreated are three times more likely to die within the next decade than the same age adults who are not mistreated. In 1978 the United States Congress declared Elder Abuse a "national disgrace," but to date there is not one federal employee working full-time on issues related to elder abuse. Now it is time for us to do something locally. The Greater Bangor Coalition to End Elder Abuse wants to prevent this abuse from happening in our community. Fifteen organiza-

tions, service providers and community members are working to combat this problem through a multi-disciplinary, team approach. We are doing something about elder abuse in our community and we WILL save lives!

One way the coalition is addressing the issue of elder abuse, exploitation and neglect is through education. The group will hold a public conference entitled "Safety For Our Seniors; What You Can do About Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation" on November 4, 2005. This conference will focus on medical and legal issues as well as the faith community. Participants will hear stories of victims and learn what they can do to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation. The goals of this conference are to heighten awareness of issues, to develop a community standard and to provide attendees with information about how to recognize and end elder abuse. If you are interested in learning more about the Greater Bangor Coalition to End Elder Abuse or the November conference please contact Shirar Wilder at the United Way of Eastern Maine at (207) 941-2800 or [shirarw@unitedwayem.org](mailto:shirarw@unitedwayem.org).

*Grants, continued from page 6*

Practicum Partnership Program coordinator under the grant, notes that the fact that as many as ten social service agencies have signed on to accept UMaine students for practical clinical experiences



Marjie Harris will serve as Coordinator of the Practicum Partnership Program.

with older adults speaks to the trust community agencies have in the UMaine social work program.





A Member of the University of Maine System

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