

Summer 2009

Silverwire Newsletter

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Silverwire

Vol. 6, No. 3 Summer 2009

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

CoA Announces Grant to Create Maine Senior Environmental Leadership Corps

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has just announced a grant to the state of Maine to establish the Senior Environmental Leadership Corps. This grant was awarded by the U.S. EPA's Aging Initiative as a "2009 Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging: Training and Demonstration" project.

The Senior Environmental Leadership Corps will provide leadership and civic engagement training with a special focus on environmental stewardship and smart growth planning to adults 50 years of age and older throughout Maine. Between 150 and 200 individuals will be nominated as delegates by municipal, county and state governments; and senior education, volunteer, and social service organizations to represent their geographic regions in an intensive skills building and leadership development summit focused on forward-thinking environmental planning that will improve environmental and health outcomes for citizens of all ages. The summit is projected to be held in Northport, Maine at Point Lookout on a date to be announced in the near future. Delegates will be encouraged to take the skills

and knowledge they gain from the summit and implement action plans in their own communities that focus on employing smart and green growth principles in future planning and program development. Administered through the University of Maine's Center on Aging and monitored by an expert advisory board, project staff will provide on-going delegate support and technical resources and showcase the accomplishments of delegates through a variety of approaches.

This exciting project will engage an extensive network of state wide professional and community individuals and groups as well as nationally recognized smart growth experts. The University of Maine Center on Aging will perform the administrative coordinating function. Advisory committee members will provide technical assistance, project guidance, and program evaluation oversight. Project partners and advisors include: the Development, Community, and Environment Division of the U.S. EPA, the Maine Development Foundation, the New England Environmental Finance Center (a collaboration between EPA Region 1 and the

Muskie School of Public Service), the Maine Municipal Association, the Maine Association of Senior Corp Programs, the Bernard Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (18 Senior Colleges with over 5000 members), the Maine Community Action Association, the Maine Commission for Community Service, the Maine Community Foundation, the Maine State Planning Office, the City of Bangor, Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging, WBRC Architects and Engineers, GrowSmart Maine, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNS) Senior

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Vol. 6., No. 3

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Lenard W. Kaye, Director

Jennifer Crittenden, Editor

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.

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From the Director

April and May have been busy months at the Center on Aging. I am just returning from a very well received clinical geriatric colloquium held on May 1st and offered by the Center in collaboration with the University of Maine School of Social Work, Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education at the University of Maine, and the Maine Gerontological Society on trauma and aging. Some 140 participants attended this important educational event addressing a much neglected subject at beautiful Point Lookout in Northport, Maine. The program attracted as large a crowd as it did and ran as smoothly as it did because of the consolidated efforts of the multiple sponsors of the event and, of course, the authoritative contributions of our expert presenters.



Lenard W. Kaye

In April, we were officially informed that our proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish the Maine Senior Environmental Leadership Corps was approved. In partnership with organizations throughout the state, this exciting initiative stands to once again underscore Maine's commitment to programming for active aging with, in this case, an eye toward environmental stewardship and thoughtful planning that promotes smart growth and citizen engagement in local Maine towns and communities. You can read more about the Maine Senior Environmental Leadership Corps elsewhere in this issue of Silverwire. In April, we were also notified that the a broad consortium of 13 agencies and organizations committed to services for older adults in Eastern Maine won a highly competitive Weinberg Foundation grant to develop a Rural Community-Based Caregiver Network and Support System in two particularly rural communities in Maine – Hancock and Washington Counties. The Center on Aging will perform the needs/resources assessment and evaluation function associated with this three year project which is being sponsored by the Eastern Area Agency on Aging.

The successful planning and implementation of these programs speak, once again, to the power of collaboration. I have no doubt that the success of our clinical colloquium and the ability in each of the above program proposals to document a broad-based team effort reflecting both commitment and engagement across multiple organizations and agencies, spanning community and higher education and both the public and not-for-profit sectors, paid significant dividends.

A commitment to collaboration among individuals and organizations remains a major philosophical principle in the work of the Center and appears all the more essential during difficult recessionary times when the leveraging capacity and resources of any single organization are particularly lean.

Partnerships and Programs.....

CENTER ON AGING JOINS NEW COLLABORATIVE AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS OF MEDICATION SAFETY AMONG ADULTS

Poisoning is not just about arsenic, dangerous plants, or chemicals. Poisoning deaths among adults are increasing dramatically. Poisoning is now the second most common cause of unintentional death, exceeded only by motor vehicle crashes. In 2004, Maine's rate of unintentional deaths rose 210 percent and continues to climb. Most of these deaths were attributable to the abuse of prescription drugs or illicit drugs:

- Nearly 2.5 million poisonings are reported each year to the 61 poison control centers across the United States.
- More than 90 percent of these poisonings occur in the home.
- Most, more than 85 percent, are accidental.
- Of these accidental poisonings, 12 percent (more than 300,000 yearly) are due to medication errors or adverse effects.

A growing concern is older adult poisoning. Many of these events involve therapeutic errors with cardiac, diabetic, or other potentially dangerous medications. Additionally, those who are increasingly confused may ingest personal care products such as denture tablets and cosmetics.

Maine citizens are urged to learn more about the proper storage and disposal of unused and expired medicines or other potentially hazardous substances. Flushing medicine down the toilet was once the preferred disposal method. We now know that this results in the introduction of harmful substances to our water supply. For information about the best ways to dispose of medications, visit www.nnepc.org or www.safemeddisposal.com.

Safe Medicines for Maine is a new partnership whose aim is to educate people about poison prevention strategies and safe disposal methods. The group was formed by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Northern New England Poison Center, the United States Post Office, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, the United States Attorney's Office, the UMaine Center on Aging, and the Pharmacy Group of New England.

Dr. Karen Simone, Director of the Northern New England Poison Center, notes that the development of this collaborative marks a new, higher level of communication around a serious issue facing our state.

"Maine is a leader in safe disposal and collection of unused medicines," says Dr. Stevan Gressitt, a psychiatrist with the Department of Health and Human Services. "Research surrounding the work to date will

help improve the health care system in general."

For further information, please call the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 or visit their website at www.nnepc.org

SENIOR COLLEGE HAS A STRONG HISTORY. WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

A project initiated by Bill Soule, and supported by Christina Diebold and Diane Cutler has provided an historical list of classes offered over 14 semesters by Senior College from its beginning in the fall of 2002. We have offered 182 courses with 165 gaining sufficient enrollment to be held as planned. More than 2,650 course registrations have been recorded as 85 instructors have volunteered their time to present subjects intended to keep our minds active.

Planning for the fall 2009 semester will begin soon with ideas needed for about 15 courses to be taught by both new and continuing instructors. Please contact Stan Marshall, Jr., interim executive director, 207-262-7927, or seniorcollege@mainecenteronaging.org, to request a course proposal form for yourself or for someone whom you wish would teach a course in the fall. Senior College would be yet more vital and valuable if we were to offer more courses. You could help make that a reality. By early September you can look for our fall catalog to decide which of our courses you would like to take next.

THE HEART AND SOUL OF RSVP

By Paula Burnett, RSVP Director



RSVP Board members recognize Kay Lebowitz (front right) and Irv Marsters (front left).

Every so often, we encounter those whose very presence inspires us to be the best person we can be. They lead by example, value differences, and find obstacles to be challenges, not barriers to action and success. For the past 10 years of my affiliation with RSVP, I have been fortunate to have worked closely with and felt supported by two such people on my Advisory Council: Kay Lebowitz and Irv Marsters. Every advisory council or board should have a Kay or Irv!

On April 6, the RSVP staff, CoA director Len Kaye, and RSVP Advisory Council members celebrated the dedicated service of Kay and Irv as they rotated off the council after several years of membership and holding office on the council. Since 1998 when I first became directly

involved with Kay and Irv at RSVP's prior sponsor, the United Way of Eastern Maine, to its present day sponsorship by the Center on Aging, I have considered

them my mentors and the gracious stewards of this program. Both are skilled developers of resources, human and financial. Both have been ambassadors for RSVP in its efforts to recruit and recognize

seniors responding to community problems by volunteering for various organizations that could not survive without a strong corps of volunteers. In addition to RSVP, many agencies and organizations have benefitted from their expertise over the years

The RSVP staff wants to thank you, Kay and Irv, for your kindness, guidance, and devotion to RSVP. You truly have demonstrated time after time that you are indeed *The Heart and Soul* of this RSVP, as you epitomize the mission of RSVP and community service.

WHAT'S IN YOUR MEDICINE CABINET?: SAFE MEDICINE DISPOSAL FOR ME UPDATE

With spring cleaning time nearly upon us, it's time to start thinking about the old and unused medicines you have lying around your house. The Center on

Aging, through funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a solution for those drugs that have accumulated in homes across the state. The Safe Medicine Disposal for ME Program provides postage-paid envelopes to Maine residents and families to use to safely dispose of unused, unwanted, and expired medicine. The program accepts both prescription and over-the-counter medicine and there is no cost to participate.

To date, we have collected nearly 1,000 pounds of medicine from Maine households, keeping these medicines out of the hands of children, or those seeking to illegally use such substances. Many of our participants use our program as a means of disposing of medicine not just for themselves but for loved ones as well and find the program valuable to them because not only does it help to keep their household safe but it also helps to preserve Maine's water and environment.

This innovative program, began as a small pilot in only 4 Maine counties in May of 2008. Today, the program has gone statewide with over 100 participating sites and locations. A partnership with many local, state, and national organizations makes this initiative work as well as it does. To find a location near you, please visit: www.safemeddisposal.com; e-mail: info@safemeddisposal.com; or call: 1-866-637-9743

TRAUMA AND AGING CLINICAL COLLOQUIUM DRAWS RECORD ATTENDANCE

On Friday, May 1st, 140 attendees gathered at Point Lookout Resort and Conference Center on Ducktrap Mountain in Northport, ME to spend the day examining the challenges trauma survivors face in older age. The colloquium addressed survivors of many kinds of trauma including: childhood physical and sexual abuse, combat experiences, natural disasters, and historical events. Trauma experts Niamh Holohan, MD, geriatric and adult psychiatrist; private practice and consulting psychiatrist, Penobscot Community Health Center, Daryne Rockett, clinical social worker; Bangor Vet Center, Janis Petzel, MD, geriatric psychiatrist, private practice and research and development coordinator, Togus VA Medical Center; and Jay Peters, PhD,

assistant professor, University of Maine School of Social Work, addressed why this period of life can be more complicated for trauma survivors, how to assess the impact, and interventions, taking into consideration the differences in the availability of treatment services. They warned that not recognizing the impact of past trauma on these clients has the potential for misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment.

This year's program drew the largest crowd in the four year history of the colloquium which is sponsored annually by the Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education at the University of Maine, the University of Maine School of Social Work, and the University of Maine Center on Aging. The Maine Gerontological Society was a co-sponsor of the 2009 program. Welcoming and introductory remarks were offered by Lenard Kaye, professor, University of Maine School of

Social Work, and director, University of Maine Center on Aging and Marjie Harris, LCSW, Coordinator, Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education at the University of Maine. Harris, Kaye, and Nancy Kelly, Field Coordinator, University of Maine School of Social Work, representing the sponsoring organizations, served as program planners for the event.



From left to right: Niamh Holohan, MD, geriatric and adult psychiatrist; Daryne Rockett, LCSW, CMP, clinical social worker; Janis Petzel, geriatric psychiatrist; and Jay Peters, PhD, assistant professor, respond to questions from the audience during the Trauma and Aging Colloquium

SPOTLIGHT ON PRODUCTIVE AGING: BARBARA GALLANT

By Lynette Roy



Barbara Gallant

Stop by the Hammond Street Senior Center sometime and you may just find Barbara Gallant there holding court with her friends and colleagues playing a game of cards or beano. At age 73, Barbara is still busy and very social. Barbara was a stay home mom for many years raising her 3 children. After raising her children, she returned to work at the University of Maine as an Administrative Assistant, where she retired after 14 years. After retiring, she moved from Levant to Bangor where she is an active member of the Hammond Street Senior Center- a special place to her. Barbara attends the center at least 3 times a week where she enjoys a good game of cards or beano. "I have friends here that I have known for 67 years." When she is not at the Center, she has 3 kids of her own and 7 month old twin great grandchildren that keep her busy. She enjoys traveling when she gets the opportunity and bowling which she has been doing twice a week for over 50 years. Still social and very active, Barbara has no plans of stopping anytime soon!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF AGING ON LEARNING AND MEMORY

BY SHAWN ELL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UMAINE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Changes in cognition are a normal part of aging. Cognition, however, is not a general ability, but rather a constellation of abilities (e.g., learning, memory, attention) that may be differentially affected during aging. Research conducted by Dr. Shawn Ell in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Learning and Memory lab at the University of Maine in Orono addresses these issues as well as investigating the impact of neurological dysfunction (e.g., Parkinson's disease) on various cognitive abilities.

In our lab, a number of important insights have been gained by comparing the performance of older individuals, younger individuals, and individuals with Parkinson's disease on tests of learning and memory. For instance, older and younger individuals are just as likely to be able to learn to classify visual images when encouraged to use analytical strategies (i.e., paying attention to the "important" parts of the image while ignoring the "unimportant" parts). Older individuals, however, are less likely than younger individuals to be able to learn to classify the same visual images when encouraged to use holistic strategies (i.e., paying attention to the entire image). The performance of individuals with Parkinson's disease, relative to older controls, is impaired only when encouraged to use analytical strategies. This research suggests that learning strategy may be critical for understanding spared and impaired cognitive functions in older individuals and in individuals with Parkinson's disease.

We remain extremely indebted to all the individuals that have participated in Dr. Ell's research studies and we are always seeking volunteers for ongoing and future studies. The willingness of older individuals and individuals with Parkinson's disease to be part of these studies is an essential part of our efforts to understand the mysteries of the brain. In light of the time commitment involved (typically 2 hours), research volunteers are paid for participation. Research studies are conducted at the University of Maine in Orono or in the participant's home if individuals would rather not travel to campus. If you think you might be interested in participating or have any questions about this research, please contact Dr. Ell (e-mail: shawn.ell@umit.maine.edu; phone: 207.581.2037, webpage: http://www.umit.maine.edu/~Shawn_Ell/ResearchParticipation.htm).

Call for Proposals!

2009 International Symposium on Pharmaceuticals in the Home and Environment

Conference Dates: October 18-20, 2009

Deadline for Presentation Proposals: June 1, 2009

Deadline for Film Proposals: June 30, 2009

For more information: www.mainebenzo.org/2009conference.htm

Possible topics may include but are not limited to: trends in prescription use or abuse, program strategies for successful drug disposal projects, best practices in prescribing medication, legislation and policies effecting prescription drug use and disposal, results of prescription drug return projects, and alternative therapies to benzodiazepines.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! UPCOMING 2009 CoA EVENTS

BAR HARBOR RURAL GERIATRIC CONFERENCE

JUNE 4-5, 2009 AT THE BAR HARBOR REGENCY HOTEL, BAR HARBOR, MAINE

The Rural Geriatric conference, offering professional cutting edge topics, affords professionals an opportunity to receive educational credits towards professional licenses as well as advancing one's knowledge on various topics. Workshop topics include: infectious disease in geriatric populations; Maine's physician orders for life-sustaining treatment; preventing harm in geriatric health care; advocacy to create change; recognizing sexual assault and undue influence; professional ethics for decision making when working with older adults; and motivational interviewing. For more information, or to register visit: <http://www.une.edu/com/cme/ruralgeriatric09.asp> or call the University of New England Continuing Medical Education Department at: 207-602-2589.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PHARMACEUTICALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

OCTOBER 18-20, 2009 AT THE POINT LOOKOUT RESORT AND CONFERENCE CENTER
NORTHPORT, MAINE

This conference is designed for health care professionals, policy makers, law enforcement, environmentalists, substance abuse professionals, and others concerned with the human and environmental impact of benzodiazepines and other prescription drugs on individuals, families, and communities. This conference will be the gathering place for disseminating the latest trend data available on prescription drug use and abuse and current disposal practices. The 2009 symposium will feature, for the first time, expert-led pre-conference technical assistance workshops. For more information visit: www.mainebenzo.org/2009conference.htm.

Announcing an Exciting New Student Educational Program! The Certificate in Leadership in Rural Gerontological Practice at the University of Maine School of Social Work

Beginning this Fall 2009!

A program of specialized preparation for graduate level social work students and advanced undergraduates preparing for careers as leaders in gerontological practice in Maine and beyond.

For More Information

Visit: www.umaine.edu/mainecenteronaging/documents/CertificateProgramFlyerApril2009.pdf

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[Smart Growth Summit continued from front page ...](#)

Corps Programs in the state of Maine, and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. More information will be available shortly as this project gets underway.

If you are interested in learning more about the Maine Senior Environmental Leadership Corps please e-mail project staff at SELCS@mainecenteronaging.org.

2009 DISABILITY AND AGING SERVICES HOTLINE (DASH) FAIR



2009 DASH award for outstanding customer service winner, Wes Smith (front center), was recognized at the 2009 DASH fair for his work with people with disabilities. Wes will be retiring from Alpha One this spring and is an active DASH coalition member. Paula Matlins (back row left), Chair of Customer Service, Chevelle Marshall (back row right), Chair of the DASH Coalition, and Val Sauda (back row center), Chair of the Consumer Advisory Board and DASH project manager., joined Wes in wishing him well in his future endeavors !