



The Community Connection For Older Adults

From the Aging Services Council of Central Texas

EDITION: FALL 2011

Welcome to the Community Connection. This newsletter is brought to you by the Aging Services Council and is meant to give you the latest news and information of interest to our older adult population. *The Community Connection* is distributed by volunteers of the Neighborhood Ambassador Program, one of the many projects of the Aging Services Council. Neighborhood Ambassadors disseminate the newsletter through contacts that they already have in place, such as neighborhood associations, civic organizations, churches, etc. To learn more about the Neighborhood Ambassador Program, Aging Services Council of Central Texas, or this newsletter, email: comingofage@co.travis.tx.us or call 512-854-7787. Information in this newsletter does not constitute endorsement by the Aging Services Council of Central Texas of any service or product.

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SECTION 1 HOT TOPIC OF THE MONTH

FALLS PREVENTION

From the day we learned to walk, we've known the pain and embarrassment of falling down. If we're lucky, we glance around to make sure no one saw us, get on our feet, and move on. If someone did see us, we're likely to force a laugh and say we're okay.

But falls among older adults is no laughing matter. Among persons age 65 and over, falls are the leading cause of accidental death. In fact, falls account for 70% of all trips to the emergency room and are the primary reason for 40% of all nursing home admissions. Every year, more than one million older adult Texans fall and approximately 1,000 die from injuries sustained during a fall.

Fortunately, most falls can be prevented with some common sense and training. Since 2007, a broad network of older adults, service providers, and advocates has been teaching older persons how to avoid falls. Operating as the Texas Falls Prevention Coalition (TFPC), the network has been conducting falls prevention classes throughout the state of Texas. It has adopted use of the *A Matter of Balance* curriculum, an eight class series conducted over the course of eight weeks, taught by volunteer lay leaders.

Joan Conrad, of the Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area, is the local coordinator of fall prevention classes in the Greater Austin area. Ms. Conrad says, "It's really exciting to see class participants moving around and getting out more. A lot of times, people are so worried about avoiding a fall that they become inactive, which only adds to the risk of having a serious fall. Our course helps participants learn how to be both active *and* safe."

A Matter of Balance classes are conducted without charge to participants, with generous support from Humana. Humana helps pay for class supplies, such as notebooks and physical therapists who guide participants through exercises that build balance and confidence.

For more information about the Texas Falls Prevention Coalition, go to: www.texasfpc.org or contact Doni Van Ryswyk at (800) 272-3921, extension 7193, or dvanryswyk@nctcog.org. For more information about A Matter of Balance classes in the Greater Austin area—or to inquire about volunteer opportunities as become A Matter of Balance coach or lay leader—contact Health and Wellness Coordinator Joan Conrad at (512) 916-6180.

Volunteer coaches must complete at least eight hours of training and do not need prior experience as a teacher or health educator to become certified. Please take the time to educate yourself on how to avoid serious falls by visiting the Texas Falls Prevention website or calling for more information today!

SECTION 2 AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

H.A.N.D. (HELPING THE AGING, NEEDY AND DISABLED)



For nearly 40 years, H.A.N.D. (Helping the Aging, Needy and Disabled) has served the Austin community by meeting its mission to enhance dignity and independence for the elderly and disabled by providing compassionate, quality care. H.A.N.D. has over 250 personal care attendants who provide assistance with daily tasks like meal preparation, housekeeping, shopping, bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, transferring and more to those who are elderly, have a disability, or are recovering from an illness. H.A.N.D. is probably best known for serving those who may not be able to afford care through a regular home care agency.

H.A.N.D. is licensed by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services. For those who qualify, services are provided through state funding. For those who do not qualify for state programs, H.A.N.D. can provide home care services on a sliding scale. As a nonprofit agency, H.A.N.D. may be able to fund home care while the state application is in process or when there are gaps in service. Additionally, through a generous grant from the Austin Affiliate of Susan G. Komen, H.A.N.D. provides home care support to those with breast cancer.

All attendants are fully screened with criminal background checks, misconduct-registry check, nurse-aid registry check and a reference check. To learn more or access services, contact H.A.N.D. at (512) 477-3796 or visit <http://www.handaustin.org/>.

SECTION 3 ISSUES IN AGING

LONG-TERM CARE

Adapted from the National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care Information website www.longtermcare.gov

Long-term care services support personal needs when independence and functionality may be limited due to a sudden illness, chronic condition or accident. Long-term care often includes assistance with the personal tasks of everyday life (bathing, dressing, using the toilet, transferring to or from bed or chair), as well as household and other daily tasks (housework, preparing meals, shopping for groceries and managing money). About 70 percent of people over age 65 require some type of long-term care services during their lifetime.

People often put off planning for long-term care because they do not want to think about a time when they might need it. However, if you wait until you need services to start planning, options may be limited. There are many types of services and resources available. Having a better understanding of long-term care will help you know which ones best serve your needs.

Planning also means thinking about how you will pay for services. Depending on how much you need, these types of services can be expensive. Medicare and other health insurances do not include most long-term care services. If you have fairly low income and savings, you may qualify for Medicaid or other federal and state-funded programs. However, most people pay for some or all services themselves. There are a variety of private financing options to help pay for long-term care, including: long-term care insurance; trusts; annuities; or reverse mortgages. Which option is best for you depends on your age, your health status, your risk of needing long-term care services, and your personal financial situation.

Since most of us will need long-term care services at some point in our lives, take some time today to explore your options and plan ahead! To find information and tools, visit the Texas Long-Term Care Partnership website at <http://ownyourfuturetexas.org>.

SECTION 4 RESOURCE UPDATE & SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES

2-1-1 Texas-Connecting People and Services

Anywhere in Texas, anyone can call 2-1-1 for free information and referrals to health and human service agencies, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, disaster relief resources, and volunteer opportunities. For services specific to our Central Texas region visit www.centraltexas211.org or call 2-1-1.



Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a free, 6-week educational series designed to help unpaid family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for a relative or friend. Caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to reduce personal stress, communicate their needs effectively in challenging situations, deal with difficult emotions, and make tough caregiving decisions. You will benefit from this class whether you are helping a parent, a spouse, a friend, or someone who lives at home, in a nursing home, or across the country. Class size is limited, and pre-registration is required. For a complete list of class locations and dates, visit www.caregiverUcentx.org or contact Faith Unger at funger@ageofaustin.org.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

Empty your medicine cabinets of unwanted or expired medications at the third National Prescription Drug Take-Back day! On **Saturday, October 29, 2011, from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm**, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and its community partners are giving the public a chance to prevent accidental overdose, abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked. To find collection locations in your area visit: http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

Medicare Open Enrollment

Each year Medicare beneficiaries have the chance to make changes to their Medicare coverage for the following year. The open enrollment period for plan changes effective January 1, 2012 are: October 15, 2011 – December 7, 2011. During this open enrollment period, beneficiaries can:



- Change from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan or from a Medicare Advantage Plan back to Original Medicare;
- Switch from one Medicare Advantage Plan to another Medicare Advantage Plan;
- Switch from a Medicare Advantage Plan that doesn't offer drug coverage to a Medicare advantage Plan that offers drug coverage or from a Medicare Advantage Plan that offers drug coverage to a Medicare Advantage Plan that doesn't offer drug coverage;
- Join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan;
- Switch from one Medicare Prescription Drug Plan to another Medicare Prescription Drug Plan; or
- Drop their Medicare prescription drug coverage completely.

Beneficiaries can get additional information by visiting the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov, by calling Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), or by contacting a Benefits Counselor at the Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area at 512-916-6062 or toll free at 1-888-622-9111.

SECTION 5 MEETINGS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

October 4, 2011 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Medicare Fraud: Protect your Medicare Dollars. *Presented by Lifetime Connections Without Walls. Telephone Learning session* for socially isolated homebound older adults 55+. For more information, go to <http://www.familyeldercare.org/lifetimeconnections> or call **512-628-1688**. Sponsored by St. David's Foundation.

October 11, 2011 and November 15, 2011 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. Medicare Updates for 2012. *Presented by Lifetime Connections Without Walls. Telephone Learning session* for homebound socially isolated older adults 55+. For more information, go to <http://www.familyeldercare.org/lifetimeconnections> or call **512-628-1688**. Sponsored by St. David's Foundation.

Oct 15, 2011. 10am – Noon: Health Insurance Options for Seniors. *Sponsored by: Austin Groups for the Elderly.* Learn about the options and changes to health insurance for seniors. For more information or to register contact: Bruce Kravitz, bkraivitz@ageofaustin.org, (512) 451-4611

November 10, 2011-9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.: Veteran's Day Health Fair. *Presented by Austin Parks & Recreation.* In Austin at the Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center. For more information call (512) 478-7695.

November 8, 15, 22, 29, 2011 - Facing the Challenge Caregiver Education Series. *Presented by the Alzheimer's Association.* Chapter office (3429 Executive Center Drive, #100, Austin, TX 78731). This four part series teaches family caregivers how to be caregivers. Offered free of charge. Call (800) 367-2132 for topics, times.

Recurring. ALZ 101: Introduction to Alzheimer's. *Presented by the Alzheimer's Association.*

Class intended for families with a recently diagnosed loved one and the general public. Contact (512) 241-0420 or TXPrograms@TXAlz.org to register. Three standing classes are offered: **Austin:** 2nd Tuesday at the Chapter Office at 6 pm; **San Marcos:** 3rd Wednesday at the Community Fish Hatchery Bldg. at 11:00 am; **Georgetown:** 4th Thursday at the Community Resource Center at 11:30 am.