



Message from Leadership

Happy New Year!

As we celebrate the close of another fiscal year at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging, we are happy to report that the Agency provided critical services to more than 23,000 older adults in Cumberland and York counties. To help us deliver on the promise of our mission: to improve the quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities and the people who care for them, SMAA depends on the generosity of many community volunteers and donors, as well as the caring expertise of our staff. In 2016, 609 dedicated volunteers provided more than 40,000 hours of service to the Agency, **the equivalent of 19 full time employees.** Without this wonderful cadre of volunteers and the expertise they willingly donate to SMAA, we could not deliver the depth of services we are able to provide to older adults in the community.

The Agency had much to celebrate in 2016. The Sam L. Cohen Adult Day Center opened in January and has garnered national attention as one of the best, if not THE best, adult day centers in the country. The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times have each profiled the Center and Maine Senator Susan Collins has touted the Sam L. Cohen Center as a Center of Excellence in her role as Chairman of the United States Senate Special Committee on Aging and in her widely distributed Senate newsletter. After several years of fundraising and construction planning, it is gratifying to see the Center up and running and making a difference in the lives of so many adults with dementia and their caregivers.

After touring the Center last winter, Senator Collins invited SMAA's Director of Adult Day Centers, Polly Bradley to appear before the Committee on Aging in Washington, DC to talk about the Centers and the positive impact adult day care has on those living with dementia and their caregivers.

Other significant highlights from 2016 include the award of a \$480,000 two year grant by the federal Administration for Community Living to expand availability of evidence based falls prevention programs throughout the state and build a model for financial sustainability beyond the

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SMAA's Healthy Aging Staff Makes Christmas Merry for Seniors

For many years, SMAA's Information and Referral (I & R) staff has worked to brighten Christmas for many seniors in Cumberland and York Counties. There are many people who do not have family or whose family lives far away. Christmas for them used to be just another day. This year, our Meals on Wheels assessors were instrumental in identifying seniors who needed gifts. Since the program's inception, I & R has partnered with Coastal Women's Healthcare to provide holiday gifts to homebound seniors. This year, the International Division of LL Bean also participated. And instead of giving gifts to each other, SMAA's Healthy Aging staff decided to join in with the area businesses to help. Realizing the need was great, Jo

Dill, Manager of Maine Senior Games (MSG), invited the MSG Women's Basketball Team to participate. Together, over 50 seniors received gifts for Christmas.

"The gifts sent ranged from coats and boots, slippers and pajamas, socks and blankets, to grocery gift cards. They were all wrapped, labeled and delivered to excited seniors and adults with disabilities. We gave out cleaning supplies, food and personal hygiene items as well." stated Meredith Anderson, Manager of I & R. "To be a part of this effort and to meet the wonderful staff members at organizations who provided the holiday support, is nothing short of magical. We all felt these gifts truly represent the spirit of the holiday season."

SOCIAL ISOLATION: A Big Problem with an Easy Solution

We are living in an age with almost daily technological advances in communication. It's ironic that despite lots of ways to communicate, so many seem to be more isolated. This is especially true for our seniors. Even the most tech savvy senior can spend days without in-person, human connection.

While seniors have opportunities for social engagement, many can withdraw. Health problems, hearing issues, the loss of close friends to illness or death can lead to loneliness and depression. Increasingly, our

family members are separated by time zones and oceans.

According to *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (2015), one in five adults over age 50 (8 million people) are affected by isolation. The Journal of Health and Social Behavior states that the negative effects of isolation and loneliness are associated with higher rates of chronic health conditions, including heart disease, a weakened immune system, dementia and increased use of emergency services and nursing homes.

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Laura Gitlin, Ph. D. Visits SMAA

Dr. Laura Gitlin, an internationally recognized applied sociologist from Johns Hopkins University, recently came to SMAA to help with training and evaluation of our Adult Day Services Plus (ADS+) program. ADS+ is an enhancement to our Adult Day Center program. Dr. Gitlin spent 2½ days meeting with the Stewart Center and Sam L. Cohen staff to understand how her program has been helping caregivers. SMAA has partnered with Dr. Gitlin as part of the grant we received in 2014 to support our Dementia Capable Service Network. With ADS+, caregivers benefit from additional focus by our staff helping them cope with the cognitive and behavioral changes they are seeing with their loved one. Using the research proven strategies, caregivers are better able to manage each day. As a result, many caregivers feel more confident and are able to extend the time they are able to keep their loved one aging in place in their own homes.

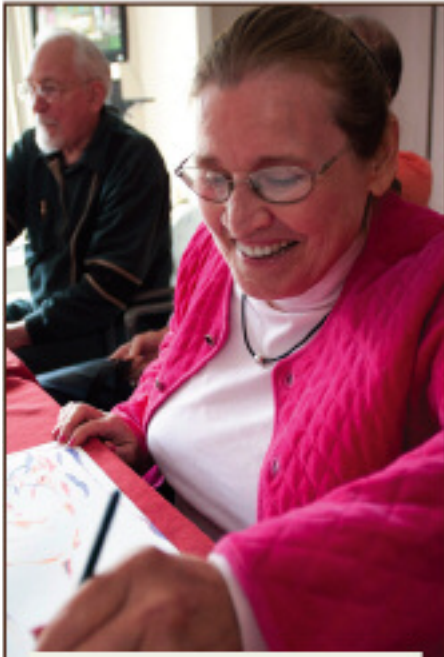
Caregivers working with SMAA Adult Day Center Staff have said that they are more understanding of dementia. They report that they feel more confident with their plans and actions with their loved one. They also express that having the hour each week to work with a knowledgeable and helpful SMAA staff person is very cathartic.

Dr. Gitlin's work leading the Center for Innovative Care in Aging focuses on dementia therapies that are not drugs, rather they are techniques for caregivers to use to care for themselves and strategies to help manage difficult behaviors.

If you no longer want to receive the paper, please contact Jessica at 396-6520 or 1-800-427-7411 x520 or jleblanc@smaa.org.

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Texas Instruments Gives Back on "Giving Tuesday"

On this "Giving Tuesday" Texas Instruments set out to have 1,000 of its United States employees, from Dallas, Texas to South Portland, Maine, give back by helping to deliver Meals on Wheels to homebound older adults in need.

Staff of the Texas Instruments (TI) South Portland location reached out to the Southern Maine Agency on Aging to help contribute towards this nationwide goal. On November 29, eight Texas Instruments employees joined the Portland/Westbrook, and South Portland meal sites where they accompanied drivers on their routes.

One TI employee spoke of their experience with Meals on Wheels volunteer: "I appreciated "Ted's" willingness to share his morning route with me. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and am happy to know that SMAA is doing so much to serve our community with their Meals on Wheels program."

In addition to this volunteer event, the Texas Instrument Community Fund gave a generous grant of \$15,000 to the SMAA's Meals on Wheels program in October of this year.



Texas Instruments staff and Meals on Wheels



Brenda Roukey from Texas Instruments and SMAA volunteer Archie Archibald



Anne Gauthier, Texas Instruments and SMAA volunteers Archie Archibald and Anne Reardon



Rena Dunn from Texas Instruments and SMAA volunteers Norm and Lorraine Lachapelle



Anne Gauthier and Brenda Roukey from Texas Instruments

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Graduate to Graduated Compression

By Cindy Asbjornsen, DO, FACP

Vein disease is one of the most common health problems in the U.S., affecting approximately 50% of the population.

Today there are several outpatient, minimally invasive treatments for vein issues, such as varicose veins or spider veins. One alternative is compression therapy. Compression stockings can prevent vein problems from occurring and relieve venous symptoms, such as leg swelling, fatigue or achiness.

Graduated, or *gradient*, compression stockings provide a degree of pressure against the leg. The pressure is highest at the foot and ankle and gradually decreases as the garment rises up the leg. This pressure gradient makes it easier for the body to pump blood up towards the heart—the direction blood *should* be flowing in—and more difficult for gravity to pull blood downward.

Graduated compression is expressed in millimeters of mercury (*mmHg*), which is the measurement of how much compression or squeeze that is placed on the leg. The higher the number, the greater the compression.

Stockings are graded on the basis of the strength of the compression at the ankle. For example, a doctor might prescribe 15-20 mmHg

for patients with spider veins, but 20-30 mmHg for patients with varicose veins who have acute pain and swelling.

Please note that “TED hose” are not the same as graduated compression stockings. T.E.D.—an acronym for Thrombo Embolic Deterrent—hose are “anti-embolic” stockings and are often worn after surgery to help prevent DVT (a blood clot in the deep vein system) while patients are bed-bound. They work well for this purpose, but for patients who are up and walking, generally, TED hose will not stop the progression of venous disease.

The Benefits of Compression

While wearing compression, patients frequently report that their vein symptoms are significantly improved, if not completely alleviated. Ample data proves that compression can reduce the recurrence of varicose veins and venous ulcers.

Compression stockings require a prescription and can be purchased at many pharmacies, medical supply stores, and specialty stores. These days, graduated compression is fashionable, comfortable, and comes in a wide variety of styles and colors.

There are many benefits to graduated compression therapy, including reduced risk factors for DVT, but compression is not right

for everyone and may adversely affect some patients with peripheral arterial disease. Check with your doctor to see if compression therapy is appropriate for you, as well as which compression strength is right for your problem.

Dr. Cindy Asbjornsen is the founder of the Vein Healthcare Center in South Portland, Maine. Certified by the American Board of Venous and Lymphatic Medicine, she cares for all levels of venous disease, including spider veins, varicose veins and venous ulcers. Contact Dr. Asbjornsen at 207-221-7799 or info@veinhealthcare.com.

Senior News

is a publication of



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Design: Becky Delaney

Printing: Sun Press, Lewiston

Senior News is published six times per year in January, March, May, July, September and November.

“Senior News” is mailed free for the asking. If you would like to receive “Senior News,” call Jessica LeBlanc at 207-396-6520 or send your name and mailing address to jleblanc@smaaa.org.

Circulation: Mailed directly to 15,000 households and 7,500 are delivered to public places from Kittery to Bridgton and Brunswick. Another 500 are distributed through Agency on Aging events and locations. Total: 23,000

For details on advertising in “Senior News,” log on to www.smaaa.org and see Senior News on home page and/or send an e-mail to seniornews@smaaa.org. You may also reach “Senior News” representative Janet Bowne at 396-6533.

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Mission Statement

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging’s mission is to improve the quality of life for older adults, adults with disabilities, and the people who care for them.

Commitment to Reasonable Accommodation:


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The Southern Maine Agency on Aging (SMAA) is a non-profit, charitable organization. Services of SMAA are supported in part by state and federal funds provided through the Office of Aging and Disability Services of the Maine Department of Human Services. Learn more at www.smaaa.org or by calling 207-396-6500 or 1-800-427-7411.


The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for everyone regardless of his/her race, ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, economic status, faith tradition, veteran status or life situation.



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From Jo Dill's Notebook

Shirts for Nationals

Dave, the owner of Willows along with his manager Nicole presented a check for \$1,500 for shirts for those going to Nationals. A huge thank you to Willows! We will have a Willow's appreciation day on Monday January 23 at their new place of business at 740 Broadway, South Portland.



Sponsorships

A special thanks to Martin's Point for their Lead Sponsorship for the 10th year in a row! We have a wonderful partnership with Martin's Point and we can't thank them enough for their continuous support!



Thanks to our newest sponsor Acadia Benefits, Inc.

Special Award

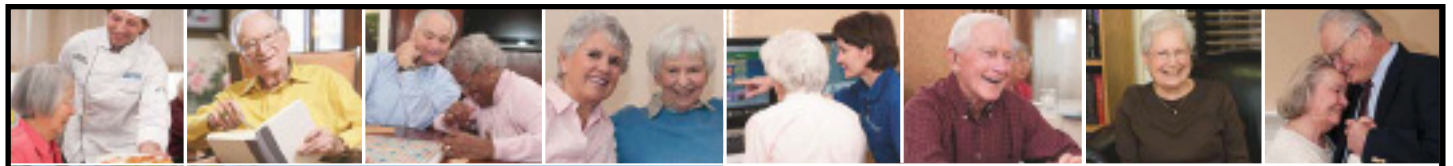
Congratulations to Maine's Deb Smith who was just selected National Senior Games female athlete of the year. Deb was chosen based on her long history of playing basketball, her leadership, her ability to get others involved in sports and her passion for both Senior Games and the National Senior Games movement. Maine Senior Games is very proud to call Deb our own. Congratulations Deb from all of the athletes and volunteers!



Wellness Activities

Starting January 8 at the Portland YMCA we will once again be offering Cornhole. John Turrell, Wellness Coordinator at the Y, and myself will be there each Monday through at least February from 10-10:45. A clinic for Short Court Tennis will be available starting from 11-12, also on the January 8. Eric Driscoll from USTA will be there to run the clinic!

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Community Rallies to Keep Seniors Warm this Winter

This year we are pleased to announce that 1678 coats were donated state-wide as part of the Coats of Seniors drive with 605 donated right here in southern Maine! For each adult-sized coat donated, Goodwill will provide a voucher for the purchase of an adult coat at Goodwill (up to a \$30 value). Additionally, L.L.Bean donated \$5 per coat towards the fuel assistance fund.

We'd like to thank everyone who donated a coat to the cause along with the following individuals and groups who went above and beyond this season:

- Tim St. Hilaire, Aging in Space Aging in Place Specialist, Custom property solutions in collaboration with Portland Area Villages – 61 coats



Tim St. Hilaire with Meredith Anderson, SMAA Information and Resources Supervisor

- The Nursing Professional Excellence Council at MMC – 176 coats
- UNUM staff – 33 coats
- OPTA Physical Therapy – 7 coats
- Town of Scarborough – 6 coats
- USM School of Social Work – 17 coats
- Lyric Music Theatre – 26 coats
- Stewart Center – 23 coats
- Sam L. Cohen Center – 25 coats

Coats for Seniors is a state-wide program organized by the Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging (M4A). Learn more at www.maine4a.org

Sarah Leeman, UNUM HR with Meredith Anderson, SMAA Information and Resources Supervisor





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Home Care for Older Adults: Myths and Facts

When Carol's husband was hospitalized, his doctors recommended home care to help him get back on his feet. The PT and OT came into their home regularly to work on his ability to function.

Bill's mom didn't have major health problems, but as her arthritis became worse, she found some tasks more difficult. Bill hired an agency to help with cooking, house-keeping and taking her shopping.

Home care can be very beneficial, but some families worry about

how it all works. Here are some myths and facts about getting extra help in the home.

Myth: Home care agencies don't care about their patients.

Reality: Nurses and therapists base their treatment on evaluation of the person's individual needs. Home care agencies should consider the person's needs before placing a worker in the home, to make sure of a good fit. If you feel this hasn't happened, contact the agency immediately to discuss options.

Myth: Home care workers steal from older adults or abuse them.

Reality: We have all heard stories about mistreatment or theft, which make some people avoid using services. It's especially important to do your due diligence when hiring privately. With agencies, ask about background checks on employees. Make sure the company is licensed and bonded. Ask how they train their workers, whether they are certified, and how they regularly evaluate quality of care. Helpful resources are available at www.smaaa.org.

Myth: Hiring outside help is only for very sick people.

Reality: Adults at home who are ill or recovering from surgery may need a range of services, such as rehabilitation, wound care, or IV therapies. Nonmedical care can be a good option for those who just need some extra help around the house with daily activities. People may benefit from both types of services.

Myth: Only really old people need home care.

Reality: Although many people who utilize home care are 65 or older, it can also be used by younger people who are recovering from an injury or dealing with a chronic condition.

Myth: I have no say about who comes into the home.

Reality: Licensed home care agencies will try to match workers to the person receiving care. If at any point you are unhappy, the agency should be willing and able to work with you to find a better fit.

Myth: The quality of care provided at home is inferior to care in facilities.

Reality: High quality agencies gives staff extensive training. To check, ask questions. What kind of training does the agency conduct? What types of licenses and/or certifications do they carry?

Myth: My person only needs help with basic hygiene, so we don't qualify.

Reality: However basic your needs, there may be assistance



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available to you. Agencies may provide a full range of care, from basic companionship to highly skilled nursing and therapy. Government- and insurance-funded services generally have medical eligibility requirements. Guidance for getting home care is available at www.smaa.org.

Myth: The person needs round the clock care, so home care isn't an option.

Reality: Many agencies can coordinate a team to provide care 24/7 in the home. Adult day programs, which offer opportunities for activities and socialization, may also be a good choice for part of the care.

Myth: It is too expensive.

Reality: There are many ways to pay for home care, including private pay, VA benefits, long term care insurance, and state programs such as MaineCare and Home Based Care.

Myth: If I am their caregiver, there is no need for additional help.

Reality: Caregivers who are emotionally and physically exhausted cannot provide good care. Everyone needs respite and relief. Paid care can offer you a break from caregiving, allowing you to refresh and stay healthy.

Be sure to check out the SMAA website under Family Caregiver resources to find more information and checklists to use when hiring help privately, using a home care agency, or considering an adult day program. One of our Resource Specialists or Family Caregiver Specialists can help you plan and problem solve for your own situation.

Adapted from AgingCare.com

Help For People Helping Aging Family Members

Caregiver Class Schedule 2017

Are you assisting an older adult? Do you spend time helping with errands, household chores, finances, meals, health or personal care? The Family Caregiver Support Program can help support you as you help someone else.

January 12, 19, 26, February 2, 9, and 16, Thursdays, 1:30-3:30PM: **Savvy Caregiver**. SMAA, Scarborough. Donation requested. Contact Kristen Bouse at 1-800-427-7411 x 558 to pre-register (required).

February 28, March 7, 14, 21, 28, and April 4, Tuesdays, 5:15-7:15PM: **Savvy Caregiver**. Stewart Adult Day Center, Falmouth. Donation requested. Contact Lori Campbell at 1-800-427-7411 x 540 to pre-register (required).

April 6, Thursday, 2:30-3:30PM: **Aging and Memory**. Noble Adult & Community Education, North Berwick. Contact 676-3223 or brenda.gagne@msad60.org to pre-register (required).

April 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, Tuesdays, 1-3PM: **Savvy Caregiver**. Naples Public Library, Naples. Contact Kristen Bouse at 1-800-427-7411 x 558 to pre-register (required).

April 26, May 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, Wednesdays, 5:15-7:15PM: **Savvy Caregiver**. SMAA, Scarborough. Donation requested. Contact AnneMarie Catanzano at 1-800-427-7411 x 545 to pre-register (required).

July 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9 and 16, Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30PM: **Savvy Caregiver**. SMAA, Scarborough. Donation requested. Contact An-nemarie Catanzano at 1-800-427-7411 x 545 to pre-register (required).

Message from Leadership continued from page 1

grant period. SMAA also hired our first Business Development staff person to help promote the Agency's future sustainability as we anticipate either flat or diminished federal and state funding for services we provide in the community. We are pleased to report that several businesses and others in the health care arena have contracted with SMAA for their employees and constituents to access more direct or on-site services such as family caregiver support, Welcome to Medicare information and Simply Delivered Meals. We anticipate that these types of contracts will happen more frequently as those in the workplace age and the need for information and services increases.

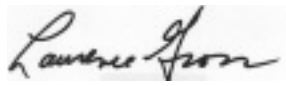
As this Report to the Community goes to print, we are just wrapping up another incredibly busy and successful Medicare Open Enrollment season. Although the final number of people SMAA staff and volunteers were able to assist during this period is still being tallied, all indications point to another record breaking year of helping more than 2000 Medicare recipients in 2016. SMAA extended community outreach sites this year from 22 to 24 to include Old Orchard Beach and Wells. We also believe that **we were able to save nearly a million dollars of out-of-pocket expenses to those who qualified for savings.**

In more good news, SMAA received recognition from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) with three awards presented at their annual conference in July. Simply Delivered for ME received the Aging Innovations Award, the highest honor presented by n4a to member agencies and the Vet to Vet program was honored with the Aging Achievement Award—one of only 46 local programs to receive this award.

At the conference, SMAA was honored to receive the first Business Innovation Award presented by the John A. Hartford Foundation. The award was created to recognize successful and innovative partnerships between social service agencies and health care systems and plans. SMAA was nominated for the award by MaineHealth in recognition of our many successful collaborations over the past few years.

Financially, the Agency continues to maintain a strong bottom line. We are very grateful to the 1,713 individuals, foundations, municipal and corporate donors who generously contributed \$562,347 of critical operating support in 2016. These donations make it possible for SMAA to continue to meet the growing needs of older adults in southern Maine who depend on our services.

We look forward to many new opportunities in the year ahead to partner with others in the community and to provide the best services and information to our constituents. We thank all our volunteers and staff who make creating better days possible. As we ring in the New Year, we wish you all a prosperous and healthy 2017.


Laurence W. Gross
Chief Executive Officer


Terry Bagley
President, Board of Directors


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Make a Resolution to Give!


This year make a New Year's resolution that's easy to stick to and make an incredible impact on the lives of older adults in southern Maine – become a GEM!

GEMs are donors who are Giving Every Month opting to spread out their annual donation out over 12 months through an automatic transfer from their bank or via their credit card. It's a simple and paperless way to donate.

If you're interested in becoming a GEM, contact Andrea Cole, Development Associate in the Development and Marketing Department at 207-396-6571 to complete the simple steps!



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HEALTHY EATING WITH HOLLY:

Healthy Snacking

By Holly Bresnahan RD

Time and lack of interest can sometimes prevent us from wanting to cook. But skipping a meal can be bad for the body. It will cause your metabolism to slow down which can lead to a sluggish feeling. That sluggish feeling can cause you to make poor choices later in the day. Blood sugars can drop as well when there is little food in the body and dizziness can occur. Multiple small meals or hearty snacks can be a great way to keep the energy going. It may not seem as daunting as creating a whole meal!

Healthy snack ideas:

- Sliced apple rings with peanut butter and raisins to create a sandwich
- Rice cakes or whole grain toast spread with almond butter, sliced banana and honey
- Frozen banana dipped in dark chocolate chips melted
- Slivered almonds with berries
- Greek yogurt or cottage cheese with honey and cinnamon mixed in (add fruit too)
- Cheese stick with whole grain crackers and fruit
- Whole grain pita bread with hummus (raw vegetables such as tomatoes, carrots, and cucumber taste great with hummus too)
- Tuna salad and crackers

Something warm:

- Steel cut Oatmeal with berries (make a large batch and refrigerate for easy reheating)
- Baked apple with cinnamon and a dash of nutmeg
- Cheesy tomato- 2 small tomatoes with tops cut off. Sprinkle breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese on top and broil for 5 minutes

- Bake a small sweet potato, sprinkle some curry and salt/pepper for a new taste.
- Toasted whole grain waffle with berries on top
- Spicy scrambled eggs- 2 egg whites scrambled on whole wheat taste with a drizzle of siracha.
- Sometimes a hearty soup can be just the ticket on a cold day. Below is a healthy soup recipe packed with vegetables and protein. Make a batch and freeze in small portions for easy reheating later.

Easy Hearty Vegetable and Bean Soup

- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
- 3/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 1 tbs olive oil
- 2 can low sodium vegetable broth (14.5 ounces each)
- 1 can (16 ounce) kidney beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 can (16 ounce) chili beans, (undrained) *(Chili beans are pinto beans in a chili sauce, if you can't find this use pinto beans and add some chili powder and garlic)*
- 1 can (16 ounce) garbanzo bean or chick peas, (drained and rinsed)
- 1 can (14.5 ounce) stewed tomatoes, cut up
- 1 cup frozen shoepeg corn
- 4 tsp ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 tbs minced fresh cilantro

1. In large saucepan or dutch oven, sauté carrots, zucchini, onion and red pepper in oil until crisp-tender. Add broth, beans, tomatoes, corn, cumin, and cayenne; bring to boil.
2. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered for 30-35 minutes or until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in cilantro. Salt and pepper to taste.

Nutrition: In 1 1/2 cups — 285 calories, 5g fat, 11g fiber, 13g protein

Recipe: www.tasteofhome.com

Make Music in the New Year!

Put aside the weight loss and exercise New Year's Resolutions for the moment. Of course, health and fitness are important, but most of us are probably working on that front already, so why not resolve to do something creative in 2017, such as painting, singing or playing an instrument?

I can't tell you how many times people over the age of 30, let alone 60, 70 or 80, tell me they think they're too old to learn an instrument. A quick tour through the music studios at 317 Main Community Music Center offers clear proof to the contrary. More than 20 percent of our students are over the age of 60 and engaged in all kinds of music, from choral groups, to private lessons, to instrumental ensembles such as the Folk Revival Group and the Wayback Machine. Our oldest student, Howard, 87, comes in every week for cello lessons.

Now, the neuroscience is clear about the aging brain. Whereas children absorb and synthesize information rapidly, it takes the older brain a bit longer to forge new connections. A good attitude, a sense of humor and patience must be companions on this worthwhile journey.

Two of the gifts that come with age are wisdom and perspective. Older musicians understand that signing up for fiddle lessons doesn't mean they hope to become the first chair violinist with the symphony. Taking on a new creative pursuit is more about the opportunity to have fun while mastering something new.

Dick Merrick, 73, and a member of 317 Main's Folk Revival group, says he relishes the relationships he's formed with other musicians and the time and freedom to be creative. "During my career I did what was necessary to get the job done. Now I can go to creative places I've never gone before because I finally have the time," said Merrick.

In 2017, give yourself the gift of creative expression.

Amy Sinclair, 317 Main Communications Director & Beginning Ukulele Student, www.317main.org

Mandatory Automobile Insurance Premium Discount for Safe, Mature Drivers

There is a little known secret that some Maine motorists have been taking advantage of for years. As of 2001, the Bureau of Insurance required that Maine insurance companies provide a mandatory insurance premium discount for motorists that are 55 years or older who successfully complete a motor vehicle crash prevention course.

AAA and other safety organizations have offered these classroom trainings for years as a way to brush up on safe driving skills and be rewarded with an insurance discounts. This past October AAA made the course even more accessible by developing a highly interactive online version of our Roadwise Driver course. AAA's online and classroom course are both approved by the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety as satisfying the mandatory automobile insurance premium discount for safe, mature drivers.

To obtain the "Safe, Mature Driver" discount you must successfully complete an approved course. An insured that successfully completes an approved course is eligible for the discount on all motor vehicles, including motorcycles, for which they are the principal operator. You must complete the course and present the certificate of completion to your insurance company. The discount should be credited beginning from the date of course completion and must be credited for a full three year period subject to the insured continuing to meet any eligibility requirements of the insurer as permitted by the law. The amount of discount is not determined by the law and will vary by insurance carrier so check with your insurance company to see how much you could be saving annually!

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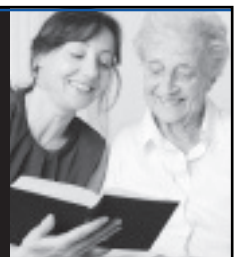


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THANK YOU for your outstanding generosity and commitment to ensuring the independence and well-being of older adults in southern Maine. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of 1,713 donors who made gifts from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016 to our Annual Fund. You gave \$562,347 in critical operating support, touching the lives of more than 22,000 older adults in southern Maine.

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THE SOUTHERN MAINE AGENCY ON AGING WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WHO MADE GIFTS IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2016.

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Southern Maine Agency on Aging would like to thank the following individuals and organizations who have enthusiastically pledged their support to THE CAMPAIGN TO CREATE A BETTER DAY.

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Martin Womer
Jonathan and Susan Young

MEDICARE



Medicare Open Enrollment Comes to a Close

In December, The Southern Maine Agency on Aging wrapped up another Medicare Open Enrollment period. SMAA would like to thank the numerous individuals and couples we saw these past few months who trust us to help them make informed choices about their Medicare plans. Our ability to serve so many is truly because of the team effort and partnerships that SMAA has with our Medicare host sites and with our team of volunteers. We would like to extend thanks to the following locations for their support. Without their hospitality, we would not have been able to serve as many individuals throughout southern Maine.

- Berwick Public Library
- Bridgton Community Center
- Bridgton Public Library
- Cornish Town Hall
- Dyer Library, Saco
- Freeport Community Library
- Larrabee Village, Westbrook
- Libby Memorial Library, Old Orchard Beach
- Mc Arthur Library, Biddeford
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Windham
- Parsonsfield Town Office
- Prince Memorial Library, Cumberland

- Redbank Village Office, South Portland
- Salvation Army, Portland
- Southern Maine Health Care, Sanford
- St. Anne's Church, Gorham
- St. Martha's Church, Kennebunk
- Standish Municipal Center
- Stewart Center, Falmouth
- The Center at Lower Village, Kennebunk
- Waterboro Public Library
- Wells Parks & Recreation
- Westbrook Community Center
- Woodfords Church, Portland
- York Hospital

We would also like to thank our amazing team of volunteer State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) counselors. Our dedicated volunteers worked extra shifts in order to accommodate the huge volume of individuals seeking to review their Medicare options. We take great pride in knowing that our volunteers routinely go above and beyond for our clients and that together we will have helped consumers save substantially in out-of-pocket health care expenses for 2017. We could not do it without them.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

- | | |
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| Doris Ames | John Holland |
| Jane Ashley | Therese Johnson |
| Jim Baker | Maryann Lawton |
| Ron Bolduc | Patricia Lennox |
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Medicare Advantage Disenrollment Period January 1- February 14

If you're in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you can leave your plan and switch to original Medicare. Your original Medicare coverage will begin the first day of the following month. If you switch to Original Medicare during this period, you'll have until February 14 to also join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan to add drug coverage. Your prescription drug coverage will begin the first day of the month after the plan gets your enrollment form. Note: During this period, you cannot:

- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan.
- Switch from one Medicare Advantage Plan to another.
- Switch from one Medicare Prescription Drug Plan to another.
- Join, switch, or drop a Medicare Medical Savings Account Plan.

Excerpt provided by CMS Publication Understanding Medicare Part C & D Enrollment Periods.

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MAINE ROOTS: Sticky Snow

By Elaine Parker



This is the first thing my brothers, sister and I ask when we awaken to a new snowfall: "Is it sticky snow?" It is in the 1950's in rural Maine. Snow with lots of moisture in it is full of possibilities. Snowmen, snow forts, snowball fights, and snow sculptures. We are elated when it is sticky snow and we bundle up in our snowsuits, hats, mittens, boots and waddle out into the frosty air.

Building a family of snow people, we start with a small snow ball and roll it into the sticky snow packing it down and zigzagging our directions and it becomes larger and larger as the layers of snow adhere to it. We love this magic process. A woman, a man and a child are built from snow of the perfect consistency for the job. Coal for the eyes and carrots for the noses are put into place. We add colorful hats and scarves for our little snowflake family. Falling down into the snow we make snow angels.

Next we build two snow forts, we have perfected a design that no Army can penetrate. We shape tightly compressed snow into a three sided structure about five feet tall with peepholes to spy on the enemy. Built facing each other, they are about 20 feet apart. We stockpile

our ammunition, mounds of snowballs and the battle begins. It is the girls against the boys, my sister and I are some of the first females in combat. Snowballs fly rapidly through the air rarely hitting their target, as we are protected by our barricades. There is much shouting as each side proclaims victory. We call a truce and decide to construct a snow sculpture, shoveling out a 12 by 12 foot square. This will be our sunken living room. We furnished it with a couch, and some chairs made out of tightly packed snow. Trying out the couch and chairs, they are cold on our bottoms, but we pretend to visit and chat a little. Our frozen, sparkling white room is a showpiece to us. We need a kitchen so we fashion the table, chairs and stove.

Now it is time for a game of Fox and Geese, a game that consist of tramping down the snow in a circle with our boots and making two intersecting paths through the middle of the circle. The figure should look like a circle with an X in it. The stomped-out circle in the middle is a safe zone. The fox chases the geese until he catches one, who then becomes the fox. All players must run only on the paths and the geese cannot be tagged in the safe zone. By this time our mittens are wet, our woolen snowsuits are sagging and damp. Time to go in for lunch. As we troop in our mother brushes the snow off us with a broom and we shed the wet clothes and huddle

around the wood stove for warmth. Vegetable soup is simmering on the stove, and the kitchen is warm and steamy with a savory odor.

We have soup and hot chocolate for lunch to warm us up. Oh, the joys of sticky snow. Now that I am older—and a homeowner—sticky, heavy, water-laden snow is not so joyous.

Elaine Parker can be reached via email at auntiee6@maine.rr.com



AGEWELL SCHEDULE

For more information, or to register for an Agewell workshop, please call 1-800-427-7411. Visit www.smaa.org for our complete listing of programs.

Tai Chi for Health and Balance

January 9 - March 8, Monday & Wednesday, 2-3PM, United Medical Gym, South Portland

January 10 - March 9, Tuesday & Thursday, 10-11AM, JR Martin Community Center, Biddeford

January 10 - March 9, Tuesday & Thursday, 9-10AM or 1:30-2:30PM, SMAA Main Office, Scarborough

January 10 - March 9, Tuesday & Thursday, 9AM-1PM, Woodfords Church, Portland

April 10 - June 7, Monday & Wednesday, 1-2PM, Baxter Memorial Library, Gorham

A Matter of Balance

January 20 - March 10, Friday, 10AM-12pm (1st session: 9:30AM), SMAA Main Office, Scarborough

January 23 - March 20, Monday, 1-3PM (1st session: 12:30PM), Paul Hazelton House, Saco

February 13 - April 10, Monday, 1:30-3:30PM (1st session: 1PM), Sentry Hill, York

March 6 - May 1, Monday, 10AM-12PM (1st session: 9:30AM, no class 4/17), Kittery Community Center

Living Well for Better Health

March 21-5/2, Tue, 9:30AM-12PM - Prince Library, Cumberland

York County Retired Educators Association Supports Seniors

This November, the Southern Maine Agency on Aging was pleased to accept a check for \$4,270.00 from the York County Retired Educators Association. For the second year in a row, the Association has chosen the Southern Maine Agency on Aging as the beneficiary of their annual fundraiser. This year, YCREA members worked diligently, selling raffle tickets to raise funds to support the growing needs of seniors in York County. The Association's support comes at a crucial time of year when Maine seniors are faced with plummeting temperatures, unstable heating costs, inclement weather, barriers to transportation, and increased social isolation. The gift will help to support the Agency's many services including Meals on Wheels delivery, family caregiver support, Adult Day Programming for seniors with dementia, and so much more. From the staff, volunteers, and older adults served at SMAA, THANK YOU York County Retired Educators Association!



Liz Thompson of SMAA and Shirley Jones of the YCREA

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www.smaa.org

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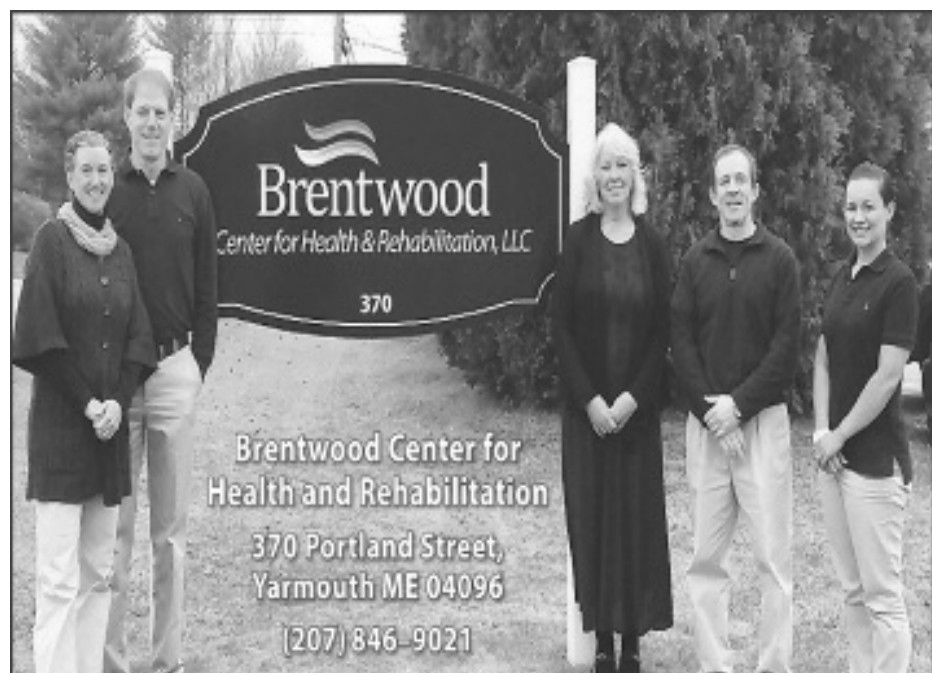
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Volunteer Highlights

This year 609 volunteers of all ages contributed 40,002 hours of service (the equivalent of 19 full-time employees) – making it possible for SMAA to:

- Deliver 144,262 meals to homebound older adults through Meals on Wheels
- Help over 5,200 individuals make informed decisions about their Medicare coverage
- Help over 250 adults improve their balance and prevent a fall through leading A Matter of Balance and Tai Chi for Health and Balance classes

Additionally, 466 RSVP volunteers (55+) contributed 34,289 hours of service (the equivalent of 16 full-time employees) to dozens of non-profits (including SMAA) throughout Cumberland and York counties.



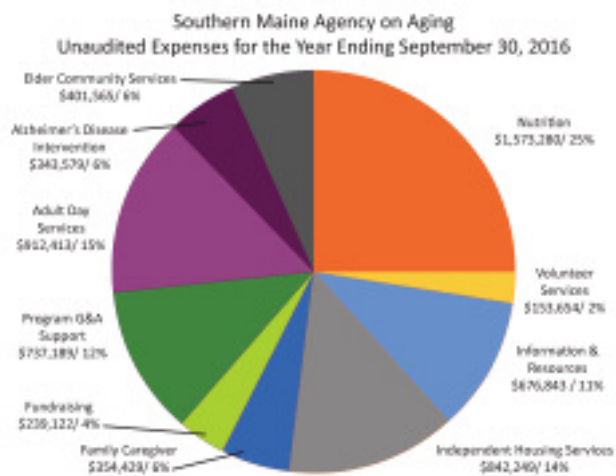
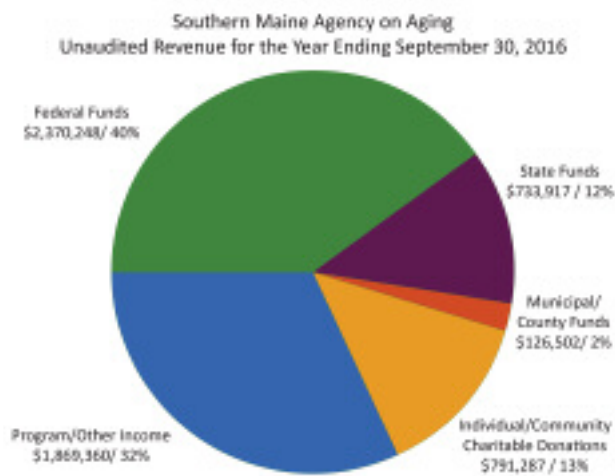
Meals on Wheels roses for Valentine's Day.



Business Innovation Award.



Maine Senior Games Opening Ceremonies.



*Figures are an unaudited estimate. Audited figures will be available in Spring 2017 by contacting SMAA.

Accolades & Milestones

- Laurence Gross, SMAA CEO received the inaugural John A. Hartford Business Award at the 2016 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4A) conference. Mr. Gross was nominated by our partners at MaineHealth in recognition of our recent and successful collaborations.
- Simply Delivered received an Aging Innovations Award at the 2016 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4A) conference. Simply Delivered is a collaborative effort between SMAA, Maine Medical Center, and the MaineHealth Accountable Care Organization with the goal of reducing 30-day hospitalization readmissions among high-risk Medicare patients by providing nutritious meals post-discharge.
- Vet to Vet received an Aging Innovations Award at the 2016 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4A) conference. Vet to Vet is an effective and replicable companion program that connects disabled veterans with volunteer friendly-visitors who are also veterans themselves.
- SMAA opened the Sam L. Cohen Center — a state-of-the-art adult day center located in Biddeford. The Center will enable SMAA to serve up to 50 members with dementia or other cognitive decline daily. The Cohen Center also offers caregiver support through classes, workshops, and one-on-one outreach.



Polly Bradley with Senator Susan Collins

- Polly Bradley, Director of Adult Day Services, was invited by Senator Susan Collins to testify on the importance of adult day services and caregiver support before the Senate Special Committee on Aging in early April. The hearing entitled: Finding a Cure: Assessing the Progress Toward the Goal of Ending Alzheimer's by 2025, included three other witnesses: Dr. Ronald Petersen, Chair of the National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA) Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services; David Hyde Pierce, award winning actor, advocate and former member of NAPA's Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services and Lisa Baron, Executive Director, Memory Home Care Solutions.
- The Maine Senior Games achieved a record high for participation in recent years — 651 athletes.
- Thank you to the 1,713 donors who contributed \$562,347 to last year's annual fund. Of those donors, 522 were first time donors to SMAA.
- Floyd Hastings was selected as a Myra Kraft Community MVP award winner for his volunteer work with SMAA's Vet to Vet program.
- SMAA's Sam L. Cohen Center was featured in the Wall Street Journal article titled "Family Caregivers Become More Crucial as Elderly Population Grows" by Jennifer Levitz.

Community Partnerships

- SMAA and OceanView at Falmouth worked together to bring several events to the Stewart Center and Lunt Auditorium including our Quarterly Education Seminars for Caregivers, the Second Annual Pooch Parade, and a free community screening of the film: Nine to Ninety
- SMAA worked with 26 restaurants, cafeterias, community organizations, and food support organizations to help provide 38,189 meals to seniors through our As You Like It and Community Cafés dining programs.
- The Center for Agewell Programs at SMAA collaborated with the University of New England, MaineHealth, Kindred at home, MaineHealth Care at Home, Maine Senior Guide Expo, York Hospital, and Larrabee Village to host fall risk screenings at several locations throughout southern Maine for National Falls Prevention Awareness Day.



Senator Collins with the Sam L. Cohen Center staff.



Sam L. Cohen Center building dedication.



Meals on Wheels Community Leaders Day.



Second Annual Pooch Parade at the Stewart Center.



Vivian Howe, Meals on Wheels volunteer, and JoAnn McPhee, Nutrition Manager, celebrating Vivian's Scarborough Terrace service award.



Derby Day hats at the Cohen Center.

Enhanced Services in the Community

- SMAA was awarded the Alzheimer's disease Initiative (ADI) grant by the Administration for Community Living. The goal of the grant is to provide a more comprehensive and sustainable network of training, referral, and person-centered services to support individuals living with ADRD and their family caregivers. Key objectives for the ADI grant include: identifying and assisting people living alone with dementia; promoting provider collaboration and caregiver education to assist people with and intellectual disability who are aging into dementia; and providing behavioral symptom management and expert consultation for family caregivers.
- SMAA, along with the four other Agencies on Aging in Maine, was awarded the Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Grant by the US Administration for Community Living to expand falls prevention programs throughout the State of Maine. The goal of the grant is to develop an evidence-based falls prevention statewide network to provide programming to 1,700 Mainers across the state over two years and to build partnerships with communities and healthcare entities to sustain the programs into the future. Together the Agencies will champion two recognized programs proven to improve balance and reduce the fear of falling: A Matter of Balance and Tai Chi for Arthritis.
- SMAA's Family Caregiver Support Program helped 900 families with access to resources, support groups, respite care, and educational programs – like Savvy Caregiver – that help families continue to provide needed care, while also taking care of the caregivers.
- Our Resource Specialists provided crucial information and support to 9,485 older adults, adults with disabilities, and their families. Our Resource Specialists help individuals sort through the many programs and services available that help older adults live independently well into their elder years.



Vet to Vet volunteer Team 6.

SMAA relies on private donations for 13% of its operating budget. To donate toward our work, call 396-6500 or visit www.smaa.org. Services of SMAA are also supported by state and federal funds through the Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services, the Corporation for National and Community Service, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, and HUD's Community Development Block Grants from the cities of Biddeford and South Portland and Cumberland County, most of which require matching money from local communities, grants, and donations. SMAA is an equal opportunity non-profit, charitable organization.



VOLUNTEER SERVICES & RSVP

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Vet to Vet Volunteers Stuff Stockings for Other Vets

The Vet to Vet team and friends Melodie Provost, Jo Dill, and Jackie Belanger contributed enough to fill 18 stockings for veterans staying at the Huot House in Saco and the Veterans Career House in Biddeford. Both facilities are operated by Volunteers of America and provide housing for homeless vets for up to two years. Staff assists the veterans in finding jobs and permanent housing of their own.

The Veterans Career House provides rooms for eight male veterans. The Huot House, which has apartments for 10 veterans, is the first co-ed veteran transitional living program in the state.

The veterans celebrated the holidays together at a luncheon on December 7, provided by Famous Dave's and Huot House advisory council members. Cabela's gave each veteran a hooded sweatshirt.

The veterans expressed gratitude to the Vet to Vet volunteers and other friends for thinking of them and providing needed items and gift cards. Volunteers also provided two bags of books for the Huot House library.

Thanks to all of you who contributed!



Vet to Vet volunteers accepted the United Way of York County's Spirit of Service award on behalf of the 19 Vet to Vet volunteers from York County. From left: Vet to Vet volunteers Debbie Wright, Floyd Hastings, John Butler, and Richard Sevigny, Vet to Vet coordinator Susan Gold, Vet to Vet volunteer Lynn White, SMAA executive director Larry Gross, and Brad Paige, president and CEO of Kennebunk Savings Bank, who presented the program with a check for \$500.

Vet to Vet Volunteers Awarded United Way's Spirit of Service Award

The York County contingent of SMAA's Vet to Vet program has received the Spirit of Service Award from the United Way of York County. Five Vet to Vet volunteers represented the 19 members of the team who live in York County at the United Way of York County's

Community Campaign Finale held Nov. 29 at the Nonantum Resort in Kennebunkport.

The award recognizes an individual or a group who makes a difference by giving their time and talents through volunteerism. The Kennebunk Savings Bank Founda-



Eighteen stockings filled with gift cards, books, toiletries, and other needed items are ready to be claimed by residents of the Huot House and the Veterans Career Center at



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tion, which sponsors the awards, contributed \$500 to the Vet to Vet program in honor of the volunteers' accomplishments.

"We greatly appreciate the Spirit of Service recognition of our dedicated corps of veteran volunteers by the United Way of York County and Kennebunk Savings," said Larry Gross, executive director of SMAA. "These volunteers make a huge difference in the lives of lonely veterans and their families."

Since June 2014, York County Vet to Vet volunteers have spent almost 1,500 hours visiting aging veterans and those with disabilities. Like all members of the Vet to Vet team, the volunteers often say that their service benefits them as much as the veterans they visit.

The Vet to Vet program covers York and Cumberland counties and currently has 45 teams of volunteers and veterans they visit. The York County team receiving the award consists of the following veterans: James Burke, John Butler, George DeGeorge, Floyd Hastings, Joseph Howes, Paul Kelly, Richard Litwin, Nicholas Lumenello, Robert Marlowe, Eric Mihan, Gary O'Connell, Rolande Raymond, Richard Sevigny, Robert Stalilonis, Gerry Treadwell, Shirley Weaver, Lynn White, Debbie Wright, and James Yankura.

Vet to Vet Team Members Celebrate Veterans Day

Portland Rotary Luncheon

Members of SMAA's Vet to Vet program had a busy week making the rounds of Veterans Day events in November.

Thirty Vet to Vet participants joined almost 200 other guests at the Portland Rotary's second annual Veterans Day luncheon held at the Italian Heritage Center on Nov. 10. Those attending feasted on a delicious lunch, then heard moving speeches from several dignitaries, including U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, Portland Councilor Ed Suslovic, Col. Andrew Gibson, chaplain with the Maine National Guard, and Major Adam Cote, former commander of Maine's 133rd Engineering Battalion. The 1st Battalion 25th Marines



Vet to Vet participants Gary O'Connell, left, and Charles Leighton, right, enjoy a conversation with U.S. Sen. Susan Collins at the second annual Portland Rotary Luncheon held November 10 in honor of Maine's veterans.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Kate Norfleet, Sen. Collins office

presented the colors in an impressive flag ceremony to begin the ceremonies.

In his opening remarks, Councilor Suslovic urged every American to show support for veterans by voting and by assisting veterans' families during the deployment of their family members. Senator Collins, recalling her own father's service during the Battle of the Bulge, noted in her keynote speech "the enormity of our collective debt to our veterans." She reported with pride that Maine has one of the highest percentages of residents who serve in the armed forces.

Col. Gibson urged businesses to hire veterans to benefit the company as well as the person. He said veterans bring to the job many valuable attributes, including maturity, wide experience, and training.

In a similar tone, Adam Cote said that veterans have experience in logistics, administration, mechanics, and as rescue personnel. They work in every field and are more likely than other citizens to start their own business, he said.

Veterans joined in singing the official songs from their branch of service—and competing for the most enthusiastic rendition. Kathy Grammer and Betty Rines played the various anthems to Russ Burleigh's direction.

After the festivities, veterans mingled with the speakers, chatted with Rotarians, and expressed gratitude for an enjoyable and inspirational celebration of Maine's military men and women.

Memoir Talk

Vet to Vet participants Rob Sanford and Howard Rennie and Howard's wife, Elizabeth, along with Vet to Vet coordinator Susan Gold, spoke to the Lakes Region Senior Center's memoir writing group about the Vet to Vet program and Howard's book, "All the Years Are Golden" at a special Veterans Day week event on November 9. Rob helped Howard complete the project, which recounts stories from Howard's life, including his military service. Those in attendance had many questions about turning memoirs into a book and about the Vet to Vet program.

IDEXX Panel

Vet to Vet volunteers Jim Yankura and Eric Mihan shared their experiences in the program with IDEXX employees during a special Veterans Day celebration at the firm's Westbrook offices on November 11.

Both men said that what began as a volunteer assignment has become a treasured part of their lives. They told the IDEXX audience that the veterans they visit are now almost like family members.

Susan Gold, Vet to Vet coordinator, talked about the formation of Vet to Vet and read a heart-warming letter

from Jackie Goulet, the wife of the veteran Jim visits. She said the program and Jim have brought much comfort to her family. "Vet to Vet's matching Jim to Ray has been a godsend to our family. These two men have become the best of friends. In fact, Jim has become just like a member of our family."

At least one IDEXX employee has enrolled as a new Vet to Vet volunteer, and SMAA hopes to have an IDEXX Vet to Vet team eventually.

Vet to Vet Friends: 100 Visits and Counting

Eric Mihan and Vernon Huestis logged their 100th visit together on November 30. The two veterans met for the first time in June 2014 when Eric signed on as a volunteer in SMAA's new Vet to Vet program. Part of the first team of veteran volunteers, Eric had little inkling how the visits would go.

That first day Eric and Vernon learned they had both served in the same division of the U.S. Army, although about 20 years apart. They also share a love of reading. On one of their early visits, they started a two-man book club. Their first assignment began with Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes short stories. After reading those, they progressed to much longer books, including the lengthy novels of James Michener.



Vet to Vet participants Vernon Huestis, left, and Eric Mihan mark their 100th visit with a discussion of David McCullough's book 1776. The two have been visiting together since June 2014.

Photo Credit: Betsy Mihan

Once total strangers, the two veterans have developed what Eric calls "a long horizon relationship," which has evolved into a strong bond. "We have opened up to one another about things we would not discuss with others," he said. Eric finds it touching that Vernon's daughters have accepted him as their father's friend.

"These visits are very meaningful to me, and I believe to Vernon," Eric said. "It gives us both an opportunity to share our lives with someone we would never have met without this program."

Eric and Vernon are "stars" in a video about the Vet to Vet program (which can be viewed on SMAA's website at smaa.org/veterans.html or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvC4EiApHKk>). Viewing them on screen, it is obvious they enjoy each other's company. Eric has often said he gets more out of the visits than Vernon does. For his part, Vernon notes that at his time of life (he's in his late 80s), many of his friends have died or moved away and that it's nice to talk with another veteran.

And talk they do. Eric said they celebrated their 100th visit with coffee and muffins from Reilly's Bakery in Biddeford and then talked about "our several Thanksgiving dinners, bridges, the New Jersey Turnpike, Biddeford parking concerns, the unusually warm weather, and David McCullough's book 1776."

Congratulations on 100 wonderful days of sharing and caring! May you enjoy many more.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

ACT NOW! Open Enrollment For Affordable Healthcare

By Elizabeth Newport
Social Security Public Affairs
Specialist, Portland, ME

Affordable healthcare is something that all Americans deserve. Before the Affordable Care Act (ACA), millions of people and their families were at risk of financial ruin because they were uninsured. Health insurance companies could also deny health insurance coverage due to a preexisting condition like cancer or diabetes. Fortunately, you are now protected with the ACA.

Open enrollment under the Affordable Care Act began on November 1 and lasts until January 31, 2017. If you want your coverage to begin on the first of the year, you will have to enroll by December 15. Now is the time to compare healthcare plans so that you can find the best one for you. You and your clients can learn more about the Health Insurance Marketplace and how to apply for benefits at www.healthcare.gov.

Signed into law on March 23, 2010, the Affordable Care Act provides Americans with better health security by expanding coverage, lowering healthcare costs, guaranteeing more choice, and enhancing the quality of care for all Americans. As of March 2016, 20 million people have gained health insurance coverage—more than 6 million of them uninsured young adults—because of the Affordable Care Act. We now have the lowest uninsured rate in the country's history.

No matter who you are, you are entitled to affordable healthcare. It's a crucial part of securing today and tomorrow. The Affordable Care Act also ensures that even if you have a preexisting condition you will be covered.

If you are already covered and want to change your plan, this is the time to do it. Factors might have changed over the last year that would make you want to update your coverage. Even if you're just curious about the many plans in the open marketplace, you can compare healthcare plans at www.healthcare.gov.

Having coverage for you and your loved ones is a critical part of a healthy and happy life. Make sure you're covered with the plan that best suits you.

And Then They Die

By Susan Lebel Young

You thought you were ready for your elderly loved one's death, had even stopped by the funeral home a month ago, signed papers, started burial planning, considered a headstone. The nice man asked, "What were her wishes?" or "Had he said what he wanted?"

You prepared, as best you could, and now your loved one is gone without warning. It seems without warning because the slow decline eluded you. You hadn't taken in how she swore "no" when offered her favorite buttermilk scone. You hadn't let yourself glimpse how his skinny legs buckled and his spindly arms failed to hoist him out of his recliner. Your body had step-by-step tweaked your hearing to match her ever-thinning voice. But your mind refused to spot the changes. How could you have missed the fading life force, even after you engaged Hospice weeks ago? The news leveled you.

Trembling, you take out the wrinkled notes you scratched because now you have to write the obituary for real. In a mental fog, you wonder, "What was the name of her grandparents' town in Latvia?" or "Was his father's father's name really Eustasad?" There is so much you wish you inquired about her true sources of joy, or his inner longings, but you'd been too drained. Those last weeks, your exhaustion sapped your compassion. You couldn't ask. Or wouldn't.

You ruminate. Did I do enough? Did I give her all I could? Did he know I loved him? I shoulda, coulda, woulda—if I'd only known. You tell yourself, "At least I heads-upped the rabbi when she fell and gashed open her forehead." You comfort yourself with, "I called the priest to request Last Rights. (Are they still called that?)" You think you added, "I'll keep you posted," or "stay tuned," which ring shallow given the present gravity.

Now is no time for shallow. Now is time for deep feelings, profound thoughts and meaningful words you'll speak at the memorial service. But you are tongue-tied. How did death's door open and snap shut so fast?

You knew we all age, get sick and die. Yet, even after your loved one spit up everything but red Jell-O, even after she slept all day and night, the bargaining repeats, "If only I had given her probiotics." or "If only he had done PT." Your denial screams, "Why?"

Frozen in time and space, still, you do what needs doing. You call the funeral home again. They tell you where to be when. They'll do all the driving. You phone the rabbi or priest. They listen, as if holding your hand. Their kindness cradles you. Then, though you are sure no

one could possibly know the hurricane tides of your stormy loneliness, the Smiths next door show up with tuna-noodle casserole. Your neighbors, the Rubens, deliver onion bagels and veggie cream cheese. Cousin Pat picks up other cousins at the airport. Chris takes your dusty black suit to the dry cleaners.

You are not alone. You open your palms to peoples' caring because the grip of grief needs to be shared. That's how life works best. Death too. Your loved one is gone. But you are here, lifted by others also here. You start to unfreeze, limping one slightly thawed foot in front of the other. Left. Right. Shaken and teary, you move. Because you must. Because human beings step up and step into their lives again and again. Some larger power and some generous people walk you. You lean on them and let yourself be walked.

Susan Lebel Young, MSED, MSC writes and teaches yoga, meditation and mindfulness. She can be reached through susanlebelyoung.com

How could you have missed the fading life force, even after you engaged Hospice weeks ago?

Social Isolation continued from page 1

If you're feeling isolated, take action; establish new routines to enhance your personal connectivity. If you can't get out easily, ask for help from your family, friends or your church. Revisit a hobby that perhaps you dropped because of time constraints. Check out your library and museums for activities on topics you might be interested in. Consider increasing physical activity by joining a walking group.

Our organization offers Tai Chi and Living Well for Better Health. Tai Chi provides safe and guided physical activity and will improve balance. Living Well for Better Health is for people with chronic pain or persistent conditions that adversely affect daily life.

Our Meals on Wheels program provides nutritious meals and a friendly visit for older adults who are unable to prepare a meal. Our Phone Pals make regular check-in calls to meal recipients who are homebound. Maine Senior Games offers a wide range of competitive athletic events for people age 45 and older. Our Vet to Vet program pairs veterans who meet at least twice a month for companionship built on the foundation of their military service. Our Money Minders program matches volunteers who meet regularly with older adults who need help with managing finances.

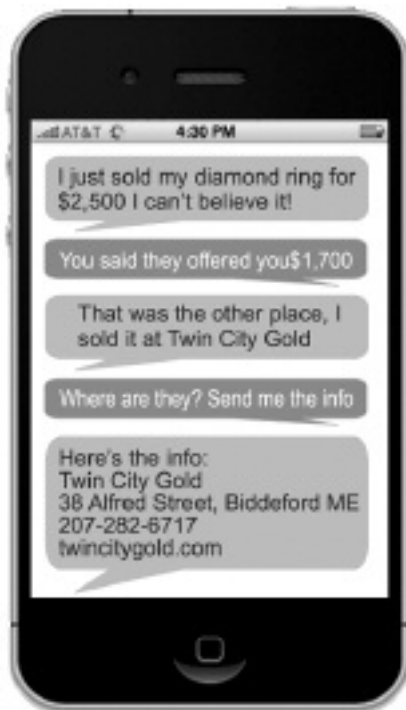
Don't let social isolation sideline you! If you're active and engaged, consider inviting a friend or neighbor who may have withdrawn. It's a win/win situation! Everyone benefits from being active and engaged!



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We are fortunate to have so many donors who understand the importance of sustaining our mission. We are increasingly dependent on individual, foundation and corporate donations as federal and state funding is no longer reliable. Maine is the oldest state by median age in the United States. We are on the leading edge of the wave of aging baby boomers.

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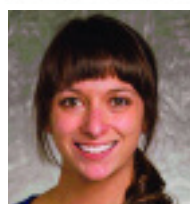
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