



From the Director's Desk

Special Gifts

The long winter months in Maine can be particularly difficult for many older adults who are homebound and don't have the same social interactions that getting out and about during the warmer months afford. For some of these people, the only outsider they see regularly is the volunteer who delivers Meals on Wheels to their home. Loraine Merrill knew this. For many years, Loraine anonymously arranged for the purchase and delivery of roses on Valentine's Day for all our Meals recipients so they would have something to smile about on that special day of remembrance. Loraine died in 2003 but left a bequest in her will assuring that Valentine roses for Meals on Wheels clients will continue in perpetuity.



Last week I received news that SMAA has received another bequest from Richard Russell that will provide more than \$13,000 annually to help support Meals on Wheels delivery in South Berwick, Eliot and Kittery. Mr. Russell's thoughtful gift will go far in helping us provide meals to an ever-growing number of homebound people needing nutrition assistance. Both of these bequests will have a lasting effect on the lives of many future SMAA clients. I hope you will consider leaving a bequest or making a planned gift to the Southern Maine Area on Aging in your estate plans. You too could be putting a smile on the face of an older adult by assuring that valuable programs continue for years to come. If you have questions about how to leave a bequest or set up a charitable trust, please contact Kate Putnam, SMAA's Director of Development, and she will happily provide the information you need.

Meals on Wheels Volunteer Training

I am also pleased to announce that SMAA recently produced a comprehensive training video for all of our Meals on Wheels volunteers. The video was put together by the SMAA nutrition staff with help from volunteer Peter Carlino. It features the voice over of Ted

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Annual Roses Delight Seniors

by Jessica LeBlanc

February 14, 1995: It was a day like every other. Meals on Wheels clients would answer the door and be greeted by a smiling volunteer. They would receive their meal; the main dish, the bread, the dessert, nothing out of order. However, on this day, they would receive a special act of kindness—a single long-stem rose laid gently across their package. It wasn't just one delivery route, or a town that received red roses, but every single Meals on Wheels clients. Beautiful red roses would decorate the packages across York and Cumberland counties.

There were many smiles that day, both from clients and volunteers. The roses gave clients and volunteers another chance to connect and to share in a great moment. Eventually whispers went back and forth and questions were raised, "Who gave out the roses?"



The answer from volunteers and staff was always the same, "An anonymous gift."

The Legacy of Loraine Merrill

For the next eight years, volunteers and staff would deliver the anonymous roses each and every Valentine's Day. It was not until the donor passed away in 2003 that the Agency could publicly thank her for her kindness and generosity. The endowment fund, left by the late Loraine Merrill, provided the Agency with a

sizable contribution towards our programs, but most importantly, provided the funding so that the Valentine's Days roses could be



Mildred Bruce was all smiles when she received a beautiful red rose and a card on Valentine's Day.

also, a "Forget Me Not" card. The "Forget Me Nots" are an annual program hosted by WMSJ Positive 89.3. Positive 89.3 asked their listeners to donate "Forget Me Nots" for distribution in Southern Maine. "Forget Me Nots" can

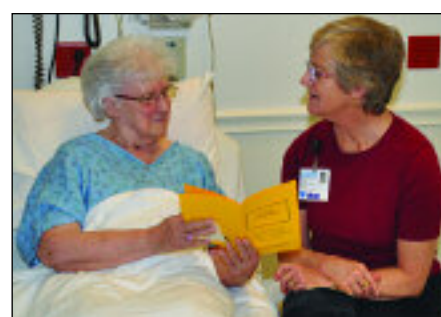
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Living Better: Home-Delivered Meals After a Hospital Stay Can Help Keep You at Home

by Susan DeWitt Wilder

You've been eight days in the hospital. You long for home—your own bed and uninterrupted sleep, a favorite chair with the cat on your lap, and familiar views outside the window. Yet finally being discharged can be frightening. Suddenly there's no expert reassurance responding to a call bell, and if you're older and the person trying to care for you is also frail, your chances of returning to the hospital within one month are one in five.

To help improve those chances, the Walmart Foundation and the Meals on Wheels Association of America has joined with the Southern Maine Agency on Aging to help reduce rates of hospital readmission for older people discharged from the Southern Maine Medical Center



Katrina Randall, RN, Care Transitions Coach at the Southern Maine Medical Center speaks with a patient about services she offers after discharge.

(SMMC) in Biddeford.

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is one of only seven organizations in the country to receive an Expanding the Vision Grant. The grant of \$42,000 will enable the

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SMAA Receives Bequest for Meals on Wheels

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging (SMAA) recently received a bequest that will support Meals on Wheels in the towns of Eliot, Kittery and South Berwick. The bequest, which will provide more than \$13,000 annually for the Agency, was left to SMAA by Richard Russell. Mr. Russell was a life-long resident of Eliot who died of cancer in 2012.

"He was a really nice guy," said Jeffrey Kolod, a financial advisor at Edward Jones who helped Mr. Russell set up the Richard Russell Charitable Trust and is the administrator of the estate. "Dick lived a very quiet life in a small cabin located on 29 acres on the river in Eliot. He

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If you no longer want to receive the paper, please contact Bonnie at 396-6526 or 1-800-427-7411 x526 or bcraig@smaa.org.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security and Tax Time

by Robert Clark
 Social Security Representative

April's showers bring more than just May's flowers—they also bring the deadline day for filing taxes. Don't wait until the showers arrive to prepare for tax season. Whether you are a small business owner, a retiree, or a new parent, here are some Social Security tax tips that may help you.

Are Social Security benefits taxable? They are for some people. About one third of those receiving benefits must pay taxes on some of their Social Security. If your total income, including Social Security and all of your other taxable income,

is \$25,000 or more and you file federal taxes as an individual, you'll need to pay federal taxes on some of your benefits. (That amount is \$32,000 for married couples filing a joint return.)

Will I get a tax form for my Social Security benefits? Yes. In fact, you should have already received it. Social Security Benefit Statements (Form SSA-1099) for tax year 2012 were mailed to beneficiaries and should have been received by January 31, 2013. If you receive Social Security and haven't received your 1099, you can request one online at www.socialsecurity.gov/1099.

We had our first child in 2012. Does our baby need a Social Security Number? Yes. Most people apply for their baby's Social Security number while they're still in the hospital at the same time they apply for the birth certificate.

But if you didn't, you'll need to apply for your child's Social Security number in order to claim the child as a dependent on your tax return. You'll also need it if you ever apply for government benefits on behalf of the child or your family. Learn more about Social Security cards and numbers at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber.

I changed my name when I got married last year. Do I need to report it to Social Security? Yes. If you've legally changed your name due to marriage, divorce, court order, or for any other reason, make sure you change your name with Social Security, as well as with your employer. If you change with one source but not the other, it could cause your earnings to be improperly recorded. That could result in you not getting all the benefits you earned when you become eligible for Social Security in the future. You

can learn more about your Social Security number and how to change your name at www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber.

I own a small business. Can I report the W-2s of my employees online to Social Security? Yes, and we encourage you to do so at www.socialsecurity.gov/bsa. Filing your W-2s electronically is free, fast, and secure! Plus there's an added bonus: when you file electronically, you receive an extra month to file because electronically filed W-2s aren't due until March 31st. You'll also receive an electronic acknowledgement receipt. And when you file electronically, you can print out your W-2s for your employees.

Does Social Security have any advice to make tax filing and future benefit applications go smoothly? We encourage you to carefully check your name, Social Security number and all of the data on your W-2s, your online Social Security Statement, and Social Security card to make sure they all match. If you don't have access to your card or statement but know your Social Security number, make sure the number and information is correct on your W-2s. A mismatch could delay your tax refund and cause problems with your Social Security benefits in the future. Such errors are much easier to fix now. If you do notice an error, you should contact Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778), or if the information on the W-2 is incorrect, notify your employer.

For more information about Social Security, visit their website at www.socialsecurity.gov.

New to Electronic Payments?

by Robert Clark
 Social Security Representative

Beginning March 1, with few exceptions, all federal benefits, including Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, are to be paid electronically. That's according to a rule from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

For years, Social Security has stressed the convenience, security, and safety of getting benefit payments electronically, offering peace of mind that your payment will arrive on time, even in the event of natural disasters or being away from home when the check is in the mail.

Electronic payments (direct deposit or Direct Express) are not only the best way to receive federal benefit payments—for most people, starting in March, they are the only way.

The truth is, for most people getting monthly benefits, this isn't really a change at all. That's because more than 9 out of ten indi-



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viduals who receive benefits from Social Security already receive payments electronically.

If you get your payments the old-fashioned way and electronic payments are new to you, here are some things you may want to know about your future payments.

- Electronic payments are safer: there's no risk of checks being lost or stolen;
- Electronic payments are easy and reliable: there's no need to wait for the mail or go to the bank to cash a check;
- Electronic payments are good for the environment: they save paper and eliminate transportation costs; and finally;
- Electronic payments save taxpayers money to the tune of \$120 million per year: there are no costs for postage, paper, and printing; and
- Electronic payments could save you money on check-cashing and bank fees.

Please visit www.GoDirect.org today to learn more about getting

your Social Security and SSI payments the safe, easy, inexpensive, and green way—electronically. And rest assured that on payment delivery day, you won't have to wait for your money; your money is already in the bank and ready for you to use.

National Nutrition Month

There will be a **HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR** at SMMC on Thursday March 7, from 11AM-1PM at the SMMC cafe in celebration for National Nutrition Month.

The theme is "My Plate for a Healthy Weight". There will be various booths showcasing nutrition and wellness tips and activities, a raffle, much more. The event is open to the public.

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Did you know that...

- More than 10,000 Mainers experience brain injury each year.
- Brain injury is the leading cause of disability and death for young people in the United States.
- Falls are the #1 cause of traumatic brain injury at 29% followed by motor vehicle accidents at 20%.
- You do not need to lose consciousness to sustain a concussion also known as a mild brain injury.

- Rehabilitation services can be a crucial part of one's recovery following a brain injury.

For more information about brain injury or brain injury resources, please visit the Brain Injury Information Network of Maine website at www.biin.org.

Submitted by Terry Roy, LSW, CBIS at Goodwill NeuroRehab Services, a network partner of the Brain Injury Information Network of Maine. Terry can be reached at 207-761-8402 or terry.roy@goodwillnne.org.



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Alphabet Soup

by Don Kopp

Old days such as these evoke memories of mom opening a can of Campbell's and serving up piping-hot alphabet soup along with a bologna sandwich on Wonder Bread sans crust. The outcome of a furtive dunk, sandwich in soup, was hard to beat. And when allowed to dawdle, one might manage to float a "cat" or "dog," or even better, "sis," producing a smirk when required to eat one's words.

Now, having put aside childish things, sooner or later, as with death and taxes, each of us will open his or her mailbox one day and

find a patriotically-colored booklet seductively entitled "Medicare & You." This year's version runs to 140 pages. For those of us who fiddled with our alphabet soup, what could be better? It's as if this endearing publication were designed by our government just to remind us how much fun the alphabet can be. There are Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D, not to be confused with Supplemental/Medigap Plans A, B, C, D, F, G, K, L, M, and N. (What must E, H, I, and J have done to have been left out?) We have HMOs, PPOs, PFFSs, and HMOPOSs under Part C – not Plan C - which are sometimes called "health plans" and sometimes "advantage plans," not sure why. Plus there is the win-

some supporting cast of ABNS, ACOs, ADRCs, ANOCs, BMIs, CAH-PSs, EHRs, EOBs, EOCs, ESRs, MSAs, MSNs, MTMs, PCPs, PDPs, PSAs, PHRs, QIs, QDWI, QIOs, QMBs, RRBs, SLMBs, SNFs, SMPs, SNPs, SPAPs, and even SHIPs and COBRAs! Should one have questions, TTY is an option.

To be honest, it kind of makes me want to pull down a can of alphabet soup and spell out "EKG."



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Empty Nesters: FREE Special Report Reveals 9 Costly Mistakes to Avoid When Selling Your Home

CUMBERLAND COUNTY - Are you an "Empty Nester" who needs a home for the future? Is it time to downsize or to move into another home more suitable for your glorious retirement years?

Like thousands of residents in our area, you may be discovering that after years of non-stop child traffic in and out of your doors, toys on the floor, music floating throughout, suddenly you can hear a pin drop over the quiet hum of the refrigerator. Your rooms are filled with pictures and memories of this wonderful time of your life, but there are many empty rooms gathering dust now that your children have moved on. The freer years ahead are exciting ones to look forward to, and it's time for you to move on as well.

If you find yourself in this situation, you're in vastand good company. And what that means is thatthere are many wonderful opportunities for you tocreate this new chapter in your life...if you know

what it takes to get the most out of the equity you've built up in your current home.

To help you understand the issues involved in making such a move, and how to avoid the 9 most common and costly mistakes most Empty Nesters make, a new report called "Empty Nester: How to Sell the Place You Call Home" has been prepared which identifies these issues, and shows you how to steer clear of the mistakes that could cost you literally thousands of dollars.

To order a FREE Special Report, visit MaineEmptyNest.com or to hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report, call toll-free 1-877-649-6714 and enter 6013. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days aweek. Get your free special report NOW to find out how you can fly your empty nest with the most cash in your pocket.

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Senior News

is a publication of



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"Senior News" is mailed free for the asking. If you would like to receive "Senior News," call Bonnie Craig at 207-396-6526 or send your name and mailing address to bcraig@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 Nancy Bloch at 396-6588.

Marketing options include, full color ads, advertorial columns and inserting pre-printed materials into the newspaper. Reach your potential customers with Maine's only newspaper specifically for people age 50 and older!

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Mission Statement

Improve the physical, social, emotional and economic well being of older adults living in southern Maine (Cumberland and York counties).

Commitment to Reasonable Accommodation:

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging will, with adequate notice and upon request, provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services to persons with disabilities, to assist in effective communication and to participate equally in programs, services and activities. Call 1-800-427-7411 x503 or from the Portland calling area call 207-396-6503 to make your request.

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 from the Maine Office of Elder Services. Learn more at www.smaaa.org or by calling 207-396-6500 or 1-800-427-7411.

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Before you fly away, please let us know your winter mailing address. If the Post Office informs us of your change of address, it costs us more than \$3! If you want the "Senior News," we want you to receive it. To update your address or to be taken off the mailing list, contact Bonnie Craig at bcraig@smaaa.org or leave a message at 207-396-6526 or 1-800-427-7411 x526. Be sure to specify the date of your expected return to Maine. Happy reading!

Care Transitions: Now Available at York Hospital

Helping Adults with Congestive Heart Failure Stay out of the Hospital Safely!

The Care Transitions Intervention (CTI)[®] staff at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging (SMAA) help support adult patients after they return home from the hospital. Research on this intervention has proven to increase the length of time people stay healthy and do not need to return to a hospital setting. In January 2013 SMAA joined with York Hospital to provide this service, free of charge, to hospitalized patients with Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). The CTI Coach assists in overseeing the patient's health needs to prepare for a return home.

CTI[®] focuses on four key areas over the course of twenty-eight days in order to assist patients in taking an active role in the health care process and avoid future hospitalization. The four areas of focus include medication self-management, the creation of a Personal Health Record, recognizing "red flags" of illness and timely follow-up with a Primary Care Provider.

SMAA's CTI Coach is also able



Left To Right: Paul Stanisewski, Becky Davis, Brenda Boston, Laurie Mcfarren, Jen Burgess.

to meet with patients to address non-medical concerns that interfere with staying healthy at home. Non-medical needs include health insurance counseling, caregiver

assistance, assistance with applications, resources for financial aid, nutrition resources, housing and home care options, and much more. All of this support helps patients and their caregivers cope with chronic illness or health conditions while increasing the likelihood that they will be more successful at staying well.

If you are hospitalized at York Hospital for any reason and have a history of CHF remember to ask for the Care Transitions Coach to benefit from this free assistance as you return home.

For more information on the Care Transitions Intervention[®] please visit their website at www.caretransitions.org.

Free Hearing Screening & Hearing Aid Service

Wednesday, April 24,
9:30AM-1:30AM


Your free hearing screening will take about 10 minutes and involves checking the ear canals for wax buildup with an otoscope and assessing hearing acuity with an audiometer.

If you already wear hearing aids, a technician will check them and replace batteries and answer your questions.

Screenings are held at Southern Maine Agency on Aging, 136 U.S. Route One, Scarborough.

You must call Lauren Gdovin at Maine-ly Hearing, 207-883-0240, for an appointment. Please do not call SMAA or stop by the office to make an appointment.

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Family Caregiver Support Program



Are you helping an older adult manage bills, prepare meals, manage medical services? Do you help with bathing or dressing, household chores, transportation to appointments, or companionship? Are you a senior who is raising someone else's child? **Then you are a Caregiver.**

Is caring for a family member or friend leaving you feeling tired, isolated, sad, guilty, stressed? Caregiving may be the most difficult and rewarding thing you'll ever do. The Family Caregiver Support Program can help.

Caring For Aging Family Members

Support/Discussion Groups

You're not alone. Connect with other caregivers in a safe setting. Find out what's working for other people.

Biddeford: For caregivers of people with dementia. 2nd Monday of the month, 3-4:30PM, at Community Partners, Inc. Contact Barbara Alberda at 713-3723.

Bridgton: 2nd Wednesday of the month, 1-2:30PM, at the Bridgton Community Center. Contact Ann O'Sullivan at 1-800-427-7411 x 541. Respite care is available on site with prior reservation

Scarborough: 4th Thursday of the month, from noon to 1PM at SMAA. Contact Kate Cole Fallon at 1-800-427-7411 x 558.

Scarborough: 2nd Monday of the month, from noon to 1PM at SMAA. Contact Kate Cole Fallon at 1-800-427-7411 x 558.

York: Caregiver support group for family and friends assisting an older adult with a chronic condition, 3rd Tuesday of the month, from 1-2 PM, at the Heart Health Institute. Contact Susan Kelly-Westman at 207-475-1167.

Other areas: Please call Kate or Ann at SMAA's Family Caregiver Support Program if you are looking for a group in another area. 1-800-427-7411.

On-Line Discussion and Support Group

Online support group: If you are caring for an aging family mem-

ber or friend, and you have Internet access, please join us! FMI, contact Kate Fallon at 1-800-427-7411 or kfallon@smaaa.org or go to the SMAA website, www.smaaa.org.

2013 Savvy Caregiver Classes

We will be offering the Savvy Caregiver series in several locations throughout York and Cumberland Counties in 2013 (see class schedule in this issue). The course is to open family caregivers for people with dementia who live in the community. The feedback we get from participants continues to show that the class is helpful to them in understanding the person with dementia and developing strategies to help them both have a better day.

Because we know that people often take on the role of caregiver without any preparation or training, Maine's Agencies on Aging are offering this training program statewide, through a grant from the Administration on Aging.

The program helps family caregivers develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make taking care of a person with dementia easier. As part of the grant, we are collecting data to add to the research on this program, by asking participants to complete pre- and post- questionnaires. So far, feedback from caregivers who have taken the class has been overwhelmingly positive.

Several recent classes have filled early, so we encourage you to call us as soon as possible.

Please contact Kate Fallon at 207-396-6558, or Ann O'Sullivan at 207-396-6541, in the Family Caregiver Support Program to pre-register or if you have questions.



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Help For People Helping Aging Family Members

Class Schedule 2013

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

March 13, 5:30-7:30PM: **Accessing Community Resources.** Maine-Health Learning Resource Center, Scarborough. Register at www.mainehealth.org/lrc (required) or call 1-866-609-5183.

April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and May 6, 2-4PM: **Savvy Caregiver.** York Hospital, York. Contact Kate Fallon at 1-800-427-7411 x558 to pre-register (required).

April 30, May 7, 14, and 21, 5:15-7:15PM: **Putting the Puzzle Together.** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Scarborough. Contact Ann O'Sullivan at 1-800-427-7411 x541 to pre-register (required).

May 24, 31, June 7, 14, 21 and 28, 9:30-11:30AM: **Savvy Caregiver.** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Scarborough. Contact Kate Fallon at 1-800-427-7411 x558 to pre-register (required). CLASS IS FULL

May 28, June 4, 11, 18, 25 and July 2, 5:15-7:15PM: **Savvy Caregiver.** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Scarborough. Contact Ann O'Sullivan at 1-800-427-7411 x541 to pre-register (required). CLASS IS FULL

July 10, 17, 24, 31, August 7 and 14, 9:30-11:30AM: **Savvy Caregiver.** Southern Maine Agency on Aging, Scarborough. Contact Ann O'Sullivan at 1-800-427-7411 x541 to pre-register (required).

Please use the numbers listed to register. Feel free to call Kate Cole Fallon or Ann O'Sullivan at SMAA (1-800-427-7411) with questions.

Putting the Puzzle Together Series

We will offer the popular Putting the Puzzle Together, a 4-part series for family caregivers, at the SMAA office in Scarborough again in April and May. The classes are for people who are currently providing assistance to older adult family or friends, and those who are thinking ahead.

The course meets in four, two-hour sessions, April 30, May 7, 14 and 21 from 5:15 to 7:15PM. Participants should plan to attend all four sessions. Topics include health as we age, resources, supports, living options, legal/financial issues, family communication, caregiver coping, and action strategies.

Flyers for the programs are available on the Family Caregiver

Support Program page of the SMAA website, www.smaa.org.

There is no charge to attend, but pre-registration is required. The class often fills. Registration deadline is Friday, April 26. Please contact the Family Caregiver Support Program at 1-800-427-7411 x 541 to register or for more information.

Catered Meals for Seniors

March Meals

Kennebunk: Friday March 1, doors open at 11—lunch at noon, shrimp dinner, entertainment, 1-800-400-6325, Park Street Apartments (Park Street School)

April Meals

Kennebunk: Friday, April 5, doors open at 11—lunch at noon, meal to be determined, entertainment 1-800-400-6325, Park Street Apartments (Park Street School)

From the Director's Desk

continued from page 1

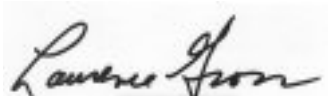
Trainer, SMAA's Director of Healthy Aging and explains food safety and emergency procedures.

The project was made possible by a grant from the Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust, with additional funds from Jeanie Marshall Foods. Through their generous support, we were able to purchase portable DVD players to have available at each meal site throughout Cumberland and York counties. For the first time, we have an effective training tool for our volunteers that is easy and convenient to use. We are hoping to distribute it nationwide to other Meals on Wheels organizations as it appears to be the only training video of its kind in the country.

Federal Funding

As this issue of the *Senior News* goes to print, there is still great uncertainty about whether Congress

will allow across the board budget cuts of a federal sequestration to be implemented. Although SMAA is a private non-profit, we do receive some federal and state funding for several of our programs, most notably Meals on Wheels, Medicare counseling and others. If the proposed cuts do occur, SMAA stands to lose nearly \$170,000 in already budgeted funding for our current fiscal year. In response to these challenges, we will be looking for additional funding sources from individuals, corporations and private foundations to help fill the gap. Rest assured, the Agency will continue to provide the critical information and resources to the more than 21,000 older adults in Southern Maine who turn to us for help each year but the loss of federal funds will reduce our capabilities.



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From the Porch

by Hunter Howe

I see them. Sipping coffee in a breakfast nook. Sitting on a bench in the village green. Pulling into a parking lot that overlooks the ocean. ALONE.

I see their faces. I detect a spent, sad look in their eyes. I suspect that they're sharing their thoughts, only with themselves. I wonder if someone's missing, likely a spouse. It troubles me.

After many years of marriage, perhaps 30, 40 or more, one spouse leaves, never to return. The other is left with the weight of acute loneliness. I wonder how a person weathers that. After all that time together, how can they? It troubles me.

The years pass so quickly. Where do they go?

Then one day, the wife receives devastating news, a life defying disease. The dying process begins. Doctor visits. Procedures. Ambulance rides. Planning. Home care. Assisted living. Nursing home. Hospice. Drifting away. Saying goodbye. Last words, last touch, last breath.

Near the end, the husband grapples with guilt. He doesn't want his wife to die, nor does he want her to suffer, yet her quality of life, long expired. When she passes on, for her he feels, relief; for him, fear.

He endures the crushing harness of heart hurt.

A life of shared hopes and dreams, built together, now buried with the spouse. The obituary tells the story of a life lost, but not the sequel, the story of what happens to those left behind. A complex clashing of sentiments may stagger the man: grief, denial, anger, regret and vulnerability. Emotional turbulence.

A broken connection. A life changed. It'll never be the same.

Tangled up in life's briar patch, he's afraid, exhausted and overwhelmed. He realizes that he's in survival mode, struggling to find the inner strength to adapt to his own long-term condition, the anguish of toiling on. ALONE.

I've read about those left behind opening closet doors and smelling their wife's clothes, staring at her preferred cereal box when he's shopping in the grocery store, hugging her pillow, keeping her placemat on the kitchen table, wondering if she knows how he's doing. He senses her presence; he'd like to hold her hand, to hear her voice, one more time. The list goes on. It troubles me.

The Well-Meaners arrive with tuna casserole. Sympathetic, they're hungry to share the sorrow of his burden. They lug verbal pamphlets, titled "Getting Your Life Together,"

containing the classic checklist of the *Do's and Don'ts*. His mind, weary from this deluge of good-intentioned advice, needs respite. He wants to shout STOP, but attempts to appreciate their kindness. Somebody cares.

After two or three months, many Well-Meaners retreat back to their own lives. Ironically, he got what he wished for, but now realizes the reality of it all. Relationships change with friends and family. The sounds of happiness in his house now but a silent echo, his new life stuck in the solemn shadows. With a sense of isolation, he clings to sanity.

Wearing a tattered cloak of tight-lipped desperation, he questions, can I withstand this anymore. He knows better than to succumb, to withdraw from others. But, it's hard not to.

I see an unshaven, older man, unsteady on his feet, bent not broken, ambling along, his cane scratching the furrowed dirt road, his dog, slow of gait, in tow. I see him trudging down the long, lonely lane, making the most of today, tomorrow but a barren land.

S. Weir Mitchell called it, "The arctic loneliness of age." After all those years, someone's missing. It's a dreadful burden, the ultimate heartache.

Some say, don't look back. But how can you not.

Grasping for a glimpse of the past, the husband takes a memory tour to their first encounter, first date, proposal, wedding, careers, buying a house, raising a family, watching their kids grow up and having families of their own.

He remembers her meatloaf, turning to make a comment while watching TV; her telling him to put the toilet seat down, to stop slurping his soup. He remembers going to the movies in the afternoon, taking advantage of the early-bird specials at a favorite restaurant, vacationing in Florida and opening their camp in late April.

He remembers all those little things that partners share, the give and take of it all, a life of love and living. It brings a smile. And, a tear. After all those years together, the bond perseveres in the memories. His wife lives on in his heart, forever.

John Milton wrote that reflections are "wisdom's best nurse."

Escaping the prison of winter woe, Spring slips out of the shadows strangling the dark grip of sorrow. The light, a welcoming beckon, nourishes sunshine for his soul, an emotional thaw. With a tentative smile, the man feels a sense of renewal. The fire of a willing spirit kindles a new beginning, fertile ground of sorts. Hope springs eternal. I can ... I can ... I can ...

I admire his capacity to survive, to find the courage to cope and move on, whatever course that movement might mean. I see him learning to live again.

LORRAINE MERRILL *created a legacy.*

Although she died in 2003, on Valentine's Day 2013, she delivered 750 roses to people who receive Meals on Wheels.



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Independence *IS* an Option!

by **Dareth A. Law, O.T.,**
Low Vision Clinic Coordinator
The Iris Network

Age-related macular degeneration often affects older adults. Interestingly, age-related macular degeneration accounts for almost half of all cases of low vision. Other causes may include diabetes, glaucoma, inoperable cataracts or genetic defects. So, what is low vision? Low vision means that even with corrective lenses—whether glasses or contacts,

medication, or surgery people still find everyday tasks difficult.


Sometimes, when a patient is at the optometrist's or ophthalmologist's they may hear the term "legally blind" or the words "there is nothing more we can do for you." But, making the most of remaining vision is an option. Vision rehabilitation is not about changing vision or trying to correct it: It is about identifying the remaining usable vision and working with this vision and the patient to both set and reach his or her goals through a variety of resources.

Identifying the degree of visual impairment and its impact is the mission of a low vision eye doctor. A low vision eye exam is different from a regular eye exam. Areas that are explored include lighting and glare, the effect of contrast in print and magnification. The patient and the doctor together set functional goals, for example, "I'd love to be able to read the paper."

When both the remaining usable vision and the patient's goals have been determined, a plan of care is developed. A full range of services and specialists is available to assist individuals in reaching their goals. One, some or all of these resources may be used. This may include

exploring alternative techniques such as lighting or how best to remain independent in your home. Maybe it is education and training on assistive devices that can range from magnifiers to computers. Or maybe it is simply learning about the support network that exists throughout the State of Maine.


Sometimes it can be difficult to ask for help. But when we do it can lead us to information and options. Talk to your eye care professional about rehabilitation services or call The Iris Network. We are one door that you can open to many resources and options with the goals of greater independence and community integration.



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CCEMA: Alphabet Soup or a Vital Resource?

When you think of emergency management, what comes to mind? For some, it's recovering from a house fire or storm related flooding. For others, managing an emergency means making sure that if a disaster happens, towns and cities have the tools they need to ensure residents are safe and property is protected.

Your Town's Emergency Management personnel spend a great deal of time preparing and training for any type of crisis. But in the face of some emergencies, municipalities need additional assistance and coordination to help address recovery.

In Cumberland County, it is the Cumberland County Emergency Management Agency (CCEMA) that does this work.

CCEMA is located in Windham. In the early 1960's it was built as an underground Civil Defense bunker. After the Cold War ended, it continued as a county emergency management agency and in the 1990's the



Bunker, present day.

Regional Communications Center was built above it.

Here in "The Bunker", eight men and women support Cumberland County's towns and cities in emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation and recovery efforts

In a widespread disaster first responders may be unable to help you promptly. The federal government recommends that everyone be prepared for a minimum of three days without assistance. If you needed to leave your home in a hurry because of a toxic chemical spill or flooding, would you remember your medications, your glasses, money or credit card? Having a "Go Bag" with important items will ensure that you are prepared. Go online to www.cumberlandcounty.org for the CCEMA website, or to www.redcross.org for more

information. If you cannot access the material online, call your local emergency manager for assistance. Your town office will give you the Director's name and contact information.

In a future issue of *Senior News*, we'll give you more information on how you can become disaster-ready. If you have specific questions you would like to see answered in an article, please contact Margaret at 201-892-6785 ext. 1008 or cushing@cumberlandcounty.org and we will try to include them.



Can you identify these ladies of the Civil Defense Auxiliary? The picture was taken in October 1964.





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Featured Eatery: Café 84

A hidden treasure, tucked away in the MMC Surgery Center in Scarborough, Café 84 provides delicious meals in a warm, comfortable environment. The dining area is bright and cheery with plenty of sunlight on clear days. In

warmer weather, diners have access to the outdoor patio that has a beautiful wooded backdrop. The lovely atmosphere is completed by the warm and friendly staff that welcomes you.

The menu at Café 84 changes daily and features a wide range of delectable fare. Enjoy fine entrees like a fresh Panini, stuffed chicken breast, pork tenderloin, and lemon dill salmon to comfort favorites like meatloaf, stuffed peppers, and mac and cheese. The baked haddock paired with oven



roasted baby baked potatoes and mixed vegetables is a favorite!

Here's what our clients are saying about Café 84:

"Where can you go and eat a healthy meal plus a drink and a dessert for \$5? The patio you can go out

and eat on in the spring and summer is very nice."

"We're treated like family. When it was another participant's 80th birthday I told the staff at Café 84. They surprised him

with a cake and wanted to celebrate his birthday with us. It's too bad that more people don't know about Café 84 because once they go they'll want to go back. It's a hidden treasure!"

Many thanks to Betty Buckley, Vickie LeBel and Janice Perkins, who allowed us to visit them during their lunches; and MMC Staff Diane Fecteau, Laurie Nappi, Scott McElman, and Cindy Scarpaci, who were wonderful hosts.

Café 84 is located at 84 Campus Drive, Scarborough. Hours of Operation: Weekdays, 6:30am - 2:30pm.



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Considering a Housemate

Did you know that people living alone make up over 30% of households in southern Maine? Living alone can be expensive, and sometimes stressful. A solution for many homeowners in New England has been to rent a room to someone that can cover some of the costs and/or tasks of maintaining a

home. When the match is right, both parties benefit financially and have the comfort and security of not living alone. But how do you find someone to share your home with, and how do you do it safely?

A new webpage being launched on Pine Tree Legal website aims to answer these questions. The website

has information on how to advertise for and screen a potential housemate, how to use craigslist.org safely, provides sample interview, written agreement/lease, and reference check, and provides information on how landlord law applies to homeshares. The website was created by a grant from the Cumberland County and South Portland Community Development Block Grant

programs, and a partnership of Opportunity Alliance, Pine Tree Legal, Avesta Housing, and Southern Maine Agency on Aging.

The website is still in draft form, but you can presently see it at: <http://helpmelaw.org/homesharing-maine>

Please send any feedback to Elizabeth Trice at trice@cumberlandcounty.org

How do I find a good match?

Like doing anything else for the first time, there is a learning curve, but many people have found good matches, and so can you.

Know Yourself.

Make a list of characteristics that matter to you, including your tolerance for noise, pets, guests, alcohol use, messiness, and how short or long a period you would want someone there for. How much money would you hope to get? How much room do you have for the person's furniture or belongings? Would you want any help around the house?

Ask a trusted friend to help.

Share your list and plan with a trusted friend, family member or counselor. Ask them to be with you at any step of the way when you feel uncertain.

Advertise!

- Ask people you already know and trust if they know anyone that is

looking for a place to live that might be compatible with you.

- Write up a description of what you are offering and what you will or won't tolerate.
- Read postings on Craigslist to figure out what might be a reasonable rent to offer.
- Place an ad in a publication that goes out to a community you are part of. This could be a church bulletin, neighborhood association, or local coffee shop.
- Use Craigslist. If you're not computer-savvy, get someone you know and trust to help you.

Don't use discriminatory language.

You have complete control deciding who gets to live in your home, but it's illegal to use any language in ads that implies discrimination based on race or color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, handicap / disability, sexual orientation, or source of income.

Check References.

Once someone expresses interest, ask questions in writing or on the phone about all the things that matter to you.

If the person seems compatible, ask for references and check them. Calling the person's employer and looking up the person on the internet using Google, Facebook, or LinkedIn can help to see if their story checks out. The best thing is to find someone you know and trust who also knows that person.

Tips:

- Don't consider anyone who is moving from another country and wants to wire you money; that's likely to be a scam.
- It's OK to ask to see evidence of their income or bank account balance.
- If you feel good about meeting the person, invite him or her to visit your home or in a public place. Invite another person you trust if it makes you feel better.

- If you wish, you can do a background check by using a service such as Tenant-Net.

Try it on for size.

Once you feel comfortable with the person, consider inviting them to do another activity with you: taking a walk, shopping, sharing coffee. Get to meet one or more of their friends, and introduce them to your friends or family members. You can also try having your match stay with you as a guest for a one or two-week trial period so there's no pressure. Download our Sample Home Share Agreement and modify as mutually agreeable or ask a family attorney to help. Your arrangement may be for money, household services, or a combination

It's a Match!

Once you're living together, set up weekly or monthly meeting to discuss how things are going and resolve any issues before they become problems. Ask for outside help when you need it.



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Medicare Savings Plan Cuts Keep SMAA Phones Ringing

It's been a very busy month for the Resource Specialists at Southern Maine Agency on Aging as they were inundated with phone calls from older adults in Cumberland and York counties who had received letters from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services informing them of changes to their Medicare Savings Plan coverage. When the letters were sent out from DHHS earlier in February, the impact of the budget cuts on the Medicare Savings Program (Buy-In) and eligibility were anticipated to include a far greater number of par-

ticipants. Now, said Kathy Baxter, Program Supervisor in the Information and Resource Department, the cuts may affect fewer people than originally anticipated. "We don't know the whole impact," she said, "but we are working with DHHS to better understand the scope of the changes."

Baxter stressed that SMAA's Resource Specialists are available to assist by telephone or in face-to-face meetings to help those who received the letters sort through the process and answer questions. "We are here to answer basic questions

but we don't determine eligibility, so folks still need to follow-up with their DHHS caseworkers to discuss any recent changes in their incomes or other information that would need updating," she said. Although the impact of the cuts may be less than originally thought, there will be some older adults who will be losing their benefits. Baxter said that the Medicare counselors at SMAA may be able to identify resources that may help in those cases.

Resource specialists are available by phone Monday through Friday from 8:30AM to 4PM. SMAA

staff and volunteers are also available for one-on-one Medicare health insurance counseling at fifteen locations around Cumberland and York counties. If you would like to schedule a one-on-one appointment at a location convenient to you, or speak with a Resource Specialist, please call 207-396-6500 or 1-800-427-7411.

If you or someone you know has been affected by the Medicare Savings Plan changes, we urge you to contact your local state representative to make sure your voice is heard.

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"Sometimes folks just need a compassionate ear to listen and support them, and I provide that."
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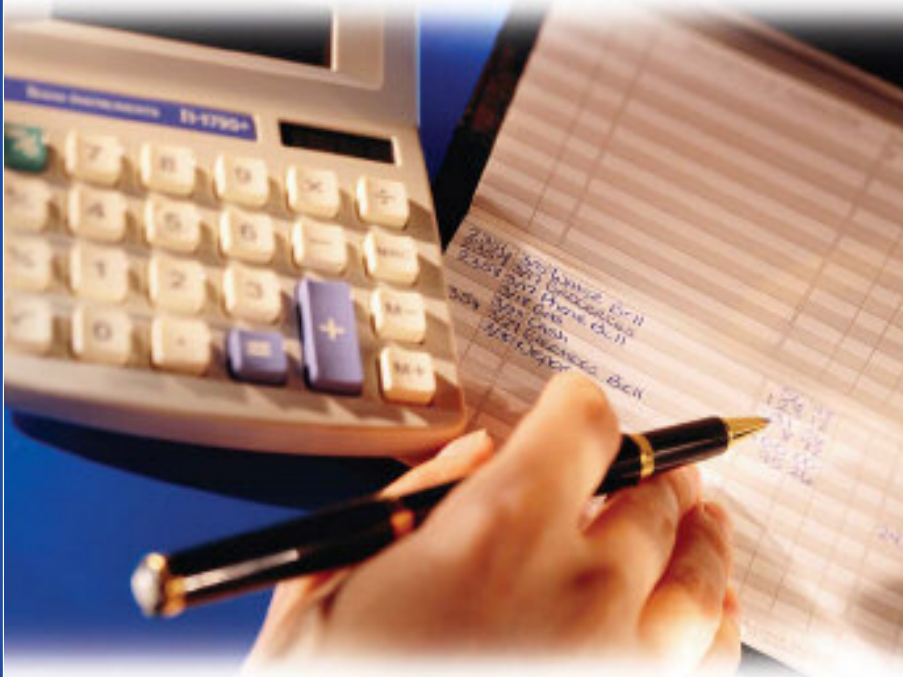
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Living Well Workshop Schedule

March 1 - April 5, 9-11:30AM
MaineHealth Learning Resource Center, 100 Campus Drive, Scarborough

March 1 - May 6, 9-11:30AM
Intermed, 84 Marginal Way, Portland, Open to Intermed patients ONLY.

May 7 - June 11, 1-3:30PM
Southern Maine Agency on Aging
136 US Route One, Scarborough

Additional workshops pending in Cape Elizabeth, Kittery, Falmouth, Naples. Call Jessica LeBlanc for additional dates and locations, 207-396-6583.

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March 13 - May 1, 1-3PM
MaineHealth Learning Resource Center, 5 Bucknam Road, Falmouth

March 15 - May 3, 1-3PM
Larrabee Village, 30 Liza Harmon Drive, Westbrook

March 25 - April 18, *Mondays & Thursdays* 12-2PM, The Woods at Canco, 257 Canco Road, Portland

March 28 - May 16, 2-4PM
Paul Hazelton House
7 Smith Lane, Saco

May 15- July 3, 11AM-1PM
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- Exercise, nutrition and stress reduction
- Tips for getting better medical care
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March 1 - April 5, 9-11:30AM
MaineHealth Learning Resource Center, 5 Bucknam Road, Falmouth

April 25 - June 6, 1-3PM
Pineland YMCA
25 Campus Drive, New Gloucester

Call for additional dates and locations.

Non-Profits Spreading the Word about SNAP Benefits

Times are tough for many Maine seniors. Many are on low, fixed incomes and must make difficult decisions every day about stretching their limited dollars to meet basic needs. Far too many must choose between paying for food, heat or needed medication and health care. Going without needed medication or cutting back on adequate nutrition can have a terrible impact on the health of seniors. Studies have shown a direct link between poor nutrition or lack of food and common health issues such as obesity, diabetes, low blood pressure, and heart failure.

Maine has the highest rate of very low food security in New England and the 7th highest rate in the U.S. The increase in senior hunger is particularly alarming. Nearly one out of eight Maine seniors is suffering from hunger or under threat of it; a 38% increase from 2001.

Sadly, a program that can help many seniors pay for food, the Food Supplement Program, also known as food stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is severely underutilized by seniors. Only one third of Maine seniors who are eligible for the Food Supplement Program are receiving benefits, the lowest rate among all demographic groups. Seniors are less likely to know that they might qualify, are confused by the application process and hold misconceptions about the benefit, including about

how it is used. They are concerned about the stigma and don't know that the benefits are used discretely with a debit card just like any other credit card.

To get the word out to seniors about the Food Supplement Program, the Maine Hunger Initiative, made up of AARP, the Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging, Preble Street, Maine Equal Justice Partners, Maine Center for Economic Policy and Maine Council of Churches, is taking action. The first step was to send a targeted mailing to low income older Mainers to let them know about the benefit and to encourage them to call their local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for eligibility screening. The response was overwhelming and underscored the scope of the problem. For days, AAA phones rang off the hook and staff fielded thousands of calls. Some, who found they would receive \$66 a month from the Food Supplement Program, to pay for food, cried with relief.

The second phase of the outreach plan will have a more lasting impact. We have teamed up with Maine's health care professionals to launch the Senior Food Supplement Prescription Program. As part of this Program, we're mailing thousands of specially designed prescription pads and promotional materials to primary care practices, with a special focus on Patient Centered Medical Home practices. The materials encourage primary care professionals

to screen elder patients for malnutrition and to write a prescription that directs the elder to apply for Food Supplement benefits.

Health care practitioners are one of the most trusted sources for seniors. Seniors listen to and follow their advice. Health care practitioners know their patients better than anyone else and are best equipped to see "hidden" socio-economic issues facing patients. An elder patient is more likely to take action if their health care provider suggests they should to ensure better health.

The prescription pad directs the senior to call their local AAA to be screened for eligibility. If the senior is seemingly eligible, a staff person will help them apply for the benefit, if necessary, or point them in the right direction to have the form completed. The AAAs are not the deciding factor on this benefit and can only help with the applications. The senior will also be made aware of ways to access other food resources like Meals on Wheels, the USDA Commodity Sup-

plement Food Program and congregate dining.

Hippocrates said, "Let food be your medicine." Health care professionals know nutrition matters, but they don't know the extent to which Maine seniors are suffering from hunger. Our health care partners in this Program, including the Maine Medical Association, Maine Primary Care Association, Maine Quality Counts, Maine Nurse Practitioner Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association, are going to help change this. These partners will be distributing information about the Program to thousands of health care professionals to educate them about senior hunger. These efforts will reduce the number of older Mainers who struggle with hunger and lead to improved health of older Mainers.

You can make a difference too! Friends are another trusted source for seniors. If you know a senior who is struggling to meet basic needs, suggest they call 1-877-353-3771 to get a benefits check-up. Tell them today – it could make a significant difference!




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The Button Box

by Merryl Hodgson

When I was growing up, my grandmother lived next door. She was the perfect grandmother. She had wonderful taste and would suggest that a camel hair coat would be perfect for me, but graciously bought me the electric blue coat with a fake fur collar that I just couldn't live without. I had no waist as a preteen and begged my grandmother to sew me a pink taffeta dress with a dropped waist and



pleats. She suggested a more flattering style, but when my birthday rolled around, kind of like the rolls around my waist, there was a beautifully wrapped box containing the pink dress, just as I had pictured it. Even though the dress made me look like an overstuffed boudoir chair and required extensive ironing by my mother, I wore it as often as I could.

It was always fun visiting my grandmother. She had a large freezer in her basement with tubs of ice cream and dispenser boxes of cones. I was free to invite any friends over on a hot day. No one ever bought us soda, but my grandmother made her own root beer. This was an exciting

process involving mixing the extract, water and yeast in the kitchen sink, bottling it up, moving the bottles to the cellar and then waiting for the bottles to explode in a big, sticky mess.

My step-grandfather kept beehives, and when I was seven years old I encountered an angry swarm of bees behind their house. I was bitten about eight times, and my grandmother felt so terrible, she told me she would do anything for me. I told her I wanted her to teach me to use her electric sewing machine. She was a bit taken aback by the danger of this request, but she kept her word and taught me to sew, the start of a life-long hobby.

Part of sewing clothing was choosing notions, a word that struck me as odd even when I was a child. My grandmother had a large green and white Edgemont Crackers box full of buttons. When I opened the box there was an odd smell, rather metallic but not unpleasant. I would dump the contents out on the floor in front of the fireplace, and let the buttons fall through my fingers. On a rainy day nothing could beat playing with buttons, sorting them in various ways and imaging the history they had. There were shoe buttons, Marine and Navy uniform buttons, shiny jet glass buttons and even jeweled belt buckles. Most of the buttons were loose, but some were attached to cardboard to keep them together.

A lot of the buttons held memo-

ries. Even now I remember the green plaid and white pique mother/daughter dresses my grandmother sewed for my mother, sister and me. There were a dozen homemade fabric-covered buttons on each dress. We also had cornflower blue Easter suits with mother of pearl buttons. The best outfits were for my doll, however. She had a tailored wool coat lined in satin with bound buttonholes and buttons I chose from the button box. My doll also had a wedding gown embroidered with seed pearls, and a satin slip with tiny buttons up the back. My grandmother hand knit doll sweaters with tiny buttons and buttonholes. I had the best-dressed doll in the neighborhood.

My mother inherited the button box, but she was more interested in making quilts than sewing clothes so she gave it to me. Over the years pearl, brass and jet buttons were replaced with boring plastic ones. I began to make jewelry with the old buttons, and soon depleted my resources. When I talked with my friends about my hobby, I discovered that they, too, had great memories of their grandmother's button box.

I realized that the legacy we create in life might be carried forward in something as ordinary as a button box.



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Annual Roses continued from page 1

be store-bought or handmade and come in all shapes and sizes.

Some contributors choose to sign their names or not, but all have kind messages from the heart.

2013 Celebration

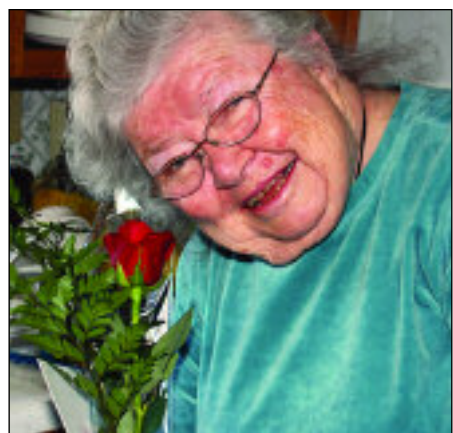
Valentine's Day has become a program tradition now thanks to the generosity of Loraine Merrill. Starting in January, the Agency gets ready to make sure that enough roses have been ordered. This year we

were also selected to receive an assortment of Forget Me Nots. Valentine's Day is something that the staff and volunteers look forward to.

This year we were fortunate to be able to deliver 750 beautiful roses from Meloons Florist and 750

Forget Me Nots from the listeners of Positive 89.3.

February 14 was indeed a wonderful day of sweetness and celebrations.



Valentine roses and cards put smiles on the faces of Meals on Wheels recipients, including Carole and George Withers, Corrine Murray, Cathy Kennedy, Dorothy Iacopucci and Stephen Shannon.

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USM Student Volunteers

Social Work students from the University of Southern Maine will be volunteering with the Meals on Wheels program at the Southern Maine Agency on Aging this spring. They recently attended an orientation program at the Agency to learn more about the programs and services offered by SMAA. Attending the meeting were students Christine Whitlock, Jessamyn Angelastro, Heather Jacques, TerriLynn Allen and Meals on Wheels Manager, JoAnn McPhee.

delivered meals will help the patient recover his or her strength and regain lost weight without the challenge of preparing a nourishing main meal every day. The grant also allows meals to be provided to the spouse or partner providing home care. Less time cooking means more time caring.

In addition, the volunteer delivering the meals will be not only a welcome visitor during recuperation, especially for those living alone, but also provide a safety check for those just out of the hospital. The meal options are designed for all tastes and health challenges and include regular, low-sodium, pureed and chopped, vegetarian, and gluten-free.

The Southern Maine Agency on Aging is already a partner with five hospitals in southern Maine, including Southern Maine Medical Center, in a multi-year Care Transitions Intervention (CTI) project to reduce 30-day hospital readmission rates for people with high-risk factors, e.g., chronic disease; falls risk, multiple medications, depression, and lack of home support.

The CTI Coaches at Southern Maine Medical Center provide post-discharge support to patients identified at-risk for readmission. They also refer patients to the CTI Resource Specialists of the Southern Maine Agency on Aging for assistance with social service needs such as expanded in-home care, adaptive equipment, prescription benefits, inadequate housing, financial challenges, or difficulties in dealing with Medicare and other insurances. The home-delivered meals will be one more service in the care package provided by Southern Maine Medical Center and the Southern Maine Agency on Aging.

Living Better continued from page 1

Agency to provide two weeks of home-delivered meals to people 65 and older discharged from SMMC and taking part in the Care Transitions Intervention program.

An article in the January issue of New England Journal of Medicine describes "Post Hospital Syndrome", the effects of hospitalization which contribute to a return to the hospital within 30 days. Dr. H. Krumholz writes "Nearly one fifth of Medicare patients discharged from a hospital, approximately 2.6 million seniors—have an acute medical problem within the subsequent 30 days that necessitates another hospitalization. These recently discharged patients have heightened risks of myriad conditions, many of which appear to have little in common with the initial diagnosis." He writes that these risks are often attributable to stresses patients experience in the hospital.

One of the physiological stresses patients face in hospitals is nutritional. Krumholz writes: "In one study, one fifth of hospitalized patients 65 or older had an average nutrient intake of less than 50% of their energy requirements." Patients are often allowed nothing by mouth for periods of time and delays in procedures or tests often extend that time. Weight loss while in the hospital has been found to be a strong predictor of readmission within 30 days.

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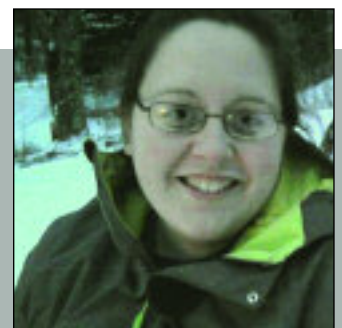
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Two students from the University of New England are interning at the Truslow Adult Day Center in Saco this semester. The students, Krista Maynes and Dylan Fionda, are both seniors majoring in psychology. They will each be doing a 120 hour internship and will be working on projects that include the annual caregiver/participant satisfaction survey and men's and women's groups at the Center.



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SENIOR MOMENTS

by Hunter Howe

Womb to Tomb



One slow night at the old homestead, I thought about the serious business of retirement planning. I call it the State of the Senior.

I reflected on two major milestones I'd reached this year, taking a social security check and selecting an appropriate medical plan. After pouring over mundane life expectancy charts, I realized the next significant milestone was my demise or as Shakespeare said, "the undiscovered country."

I wondered if financial planners considered funeral planning a key element of retirement planning. A recent issue of *Smart Money* magazine reported that the average cost of a funeral is \$7000. Now that's a chunk of change. It sounded low especially as I've always had my heart set on a glitzy funeral complete with a gold-plated casket. After all, Eternity lasts a long time. So why not travel in style in a first class compartment.

I grabbed my investment portfolio. Oh my. Over the last 12 years, earnings had stagnated, bad news for enjoying a prosperous retirement and planning a fine funeral.

In 2008, I'd attached a "Bliss" cartoon to the folder. A downcast man says to his wife, "Our broker just informed me we have to die in two years."

Unless the market surged upward, my lofty goal for a fancy funeral had taken a downward spiral. As Oscar Wilde once said, "Atlas, I'm dying beyond my means."

I decided that I'd have to set my sights lower. I needed a serious deal on a casket. I needed to bargain shop.

I'd heard that some of the big-box discount stores sold caskets. Sure enough, I discovered that Wal-Mart did, both in their monster one-stop-shop megastores and online. They sure have it covered, from cribs to caskets. One informative article stated, "When Wal-Mart started doing this, the price of being dead just dropped... save money, die better." Now I was on to something.

I decided to check out a superstore. Charging through the entrance, I asked a greeter if the Casket Department was located next to the "restrooms." He didn't appreciate my humor.

A young couple canvassed the caskets. I overheard this bewildering exchange. "Look Ralph, this casket's drop-dead gorgeous and it's on sale. Let's buy it." I watched Ralph's lip curl; a sly smile formed on his face. "Well, we could put it in the spare bedroom; your mother could sleep in it when she visits. Ok, let's stick it in the pickup.

Say, where's the motor oil?"

I'd heard enough. Back home, I searched the Wal-Mart website. I had many questions like whether they had a layaway plan and whether they delivered.

In fact, another casket website did offer next day delivery. The site said, "The caskets are shipped in the cargo bay of passenger airlines... the casket is loaded in first and the passengers' luggage is loaded on and around it." You think I'm exaggerating? No wonder our luggage gets scrapped, ripped and battered. Next time you fly, pack your precious belongings in a casket.

This detail caught my attention, "The caskets are not guaranteed to leak." Hmm, how could I rest in peace in a soggy coffin with the sump pump banging away? The good news, the caskets were marked down from \$1995 to \$995. All you had to do was hit the "add to cart" button. Huh? Imagine working in that shipping department. "Look out Louie!"

But, \$995 was still too steep. With so many grave matters to consider, I finally woke up to the fact that I have a touch of claustrophobia. So, I decided on cremation. A brass urn with butterflies on the outside only cost \$99.95. I do like butterflies.

No disrespect to Wal-Mart, but they won't be burying me in a casket. Instead, I'll plan a celebratory "Here's to Hunter" picnic in a tranquil meadow and hire a harpist. I do hope that whoever tosses my ashes checks the wind direction. Otherwise, the potato salad might taste peculiar.

In the meantime, I'll follow Somerset Maugham's sound recommendation that, "Death is a very dull, dreary affair, and my advice to you is to have nothing whatever to do with it."

Hunter says, "In order to maintain our sanity in the face of reality, we surely need a dash of silliness and a dab of nonsense in our daily porridge."

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Clockwise, from left: Shabbir Reza, MD, Paul Meadows, MD, Howard Sherman, MD, Edward Quinlan, III, MD, and Jill Gagne, NP

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Life Story Songwriting

We each have our own (individual) ways of dealing with loss of a loved one. Many of us have experienced the influence of sounds, words, and music upon our grief. The source of these sounds may be laughter or crying, or the natural world, such as sounds of water, birds, or even a beloved pet. The source of words may be those

written in a sympathy card or on a website, or those spoken during a memorial service. The source of music may be the comforting swell of familiar songs or hymns, or the angry dissonance of hard rock. There is a power of expression, especially through spontaneous movement, percussion, and singing of lyrics and melody, to release and carry us

through grief.

We can imagine the significance of songs written for, about, or with our own loved ones, in four areas: expressing of emotions related to grief, building of relationships through sharing life stories, strengthening of community through celebration and inspiration, and preserving of personal and collective memory and history.

Belief in the meaningful benefits of life story songs for individuals is what led Deann Marsh, Songwriter/Singer, to develop her business, Portraits in Song. She welcomes views on this topic via her website, PortraitsinSong.com. Marsh, a hospice volunteer, and former low vision rehabilitation teacher, told of the growth of her desire to use her musical creativity to write life story songs: upon being shown photos of individual's family members during her years of providing home visits, she desired more time to listen to their stories, and to put some of them to music later. Memorial songwriting is closest to her mission of encouraging life song writing for the well-being of anyone, as "noteworthy" individuals.

This passion arose from her own experience of writing a song about her grandmother's life, in response to the decision that it would be best for her family if she did not travel to attend her grandmother's funeral. She found an outlet for her grief in addressing admiration, regrets, and questions in a poem about her grandmother's life on a Midwest farm. She wrote of one of many surprises during the process of writing a song based on the poem: "My mother informed me that square dancing was the only form of dancing acceptable to my Grandmother. That comment "decided for me" that it would be in keeping with Grandma's wishes for me to convert a waltz section of the song to square dance (4/4) time instead, since the degree of touching of a dance partner which may occur during waltzing was frowned upon in my

Grandma's religious view. " She found it gratifying to share the song with family after the funeral, and now it may serve as a lasting tribute to her "Grandma" during family reunions.

To address reservations about engaging in a personalized songwriting process, she encourages starting with interviewing relatives and friends, researching cultural history, journaling and poetry-writing. Those who prefer private self expression may be reassured to know of her policy of confidentiality, and the option of sharing only select verses or versions with family members or others. To those who are humble about the idea of a song about one's self, she recounts the comment of a friend who didn't realize how "uplifting" it could be to celebrate the small and large contributions of a lifetime. Regarding any concern about one's own level of musical aptitude or skill, Ms. Marsh focuses on the meaningful relationship and freedom of expression, not performance. She reminds families and colleagues of the option of a song as a group gift for a family member or retiring coworker.

Other community resources which promote recording and sharing of life stories include and historical and genealogical societies, and organizations such as Portland's "The Telling Room" and USM's Center for Life Stories.

SMAA Receives Bequest continued from page 1

worked at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and saved his money. Some people thought he was a hermit but he was just a very quiet, kind man," said Kolod.

"This bequest will enable SMAA to expand our services in York county," said Ted Trainer, Director of Healthy Aging. "We currently have a presence at the Eliot Methodist Church and the Kittery Community Center and this money will help us reach out to more older adults in those towns." Besides Meals on Wheels deliveries, SMAA also offers congregate dining at the Kittery Community Center once a month and offers vouchers for the "As You Like It" program at various locations in York County.

In addition to the money he left for Meals on Wheels, Russell also left bequests for the Marine Law Enforcement Foundation that supports the families of fallen soldiers and the Kittery Footprints Food Pantry. It was his intention that the money he left to the three charities be used for immediate needs and operations and not just invested for the future. Kolod said that each of the three charities will receive annual donations from the trust "in perpetuity", just the way Mr. Russell desired.

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- Group store tours
- Local school presentations

Physical Activity Suggestions for Caregivers

AnneMarie Catanzano, MA,
Resource Specialist

As age increases, risk factors for poor health, chronic diseases and balance issues increase. Eighty-eight percent of those over the age of 65 have at least one chronic health condition. Physical inactivity is an independent risk factor for chronic diseases. The more physically active a person is, the more these risk factors can be minimized. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of developing or dying from heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and high blood pressure. Physical activity can improve the ability to function well and remain independent in spite of health problems. It can lower the risk of developing depression and can provide an improved quality of sleep. Even the mobility and functioning of frail and very old adults can be improved by regular physical activity. Few factors contribute as much to successful aging as having a physically active lifestyle.

Investing a small amount of time in becoming more active can produce big dividends in better health. Nature has been kind in how physical activity affects our health. We do not need to spend hours a day in vigorous activity to be healthier. Significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Spending just 30 minutes in moderate activity, such as a brisk walk or raking leaves, has remarkable health benefits for older adults.

The population of older men and women encompasses the whole range of health status—everyone from people who run marathons to frail adults who use wheelchairs. There is no "one size fits all" approach. A variety of barriers may make it harder for older persons to increase and maintain their physical activity. Many older adults serve as caregivers for others, which can restrict their opportunities for regular physical activity. Often these caregiving responsibilities lead to poor health and depression for the caregiver.

Here are some suggestions to start you on your way to getting more physical activity into your life:

- Find activities that you enjoy that can become a regular part of your routine, and find others to join you. Partners can make it more fun, can provide encouragement, and help overcome problems of transportation or safety.
- Consult your health care provider about what level of activity is safe and appropriate for you. Discuss any medical issues that might be interfering with more regular activity and review any symptoms and problems that might affect what activities are safe for you.
- Set specific activity goals. Start slowly and build up to increasing levels of activity. Try to be active for 30 minutes a day on a regular basis.

If you are confined to your home by your caregiving responsibilities try some of these suggestions:

- Dancing is good exercise, fun and a good mood lifter.

- Try easy seated exercises your family member may be able to do with you
- Have a friend come over at a certain time each day and follow an exercise routine on a video or DVD. Exchange videos with friends so you have a variety.
- Housework and gardening can all be moderate exercise.... you may already be doing that.
- Is 30 minutes too lofty a goal? You can build up to 30 minutes by combining three 10 minute exercise sessions. Don't seem to have the time or energy for 10 minutes? Start with just five minutes.
- Try wearing a pedometer and make it a goal to increase the number of steps each week

- If you can get out of the house, check out community programs or local exercise venues for programs directed to older adults. There are often walking programs at indoor facilities such as gyms or malls.

It is especially important for caregivers to make some time for exercise. It is an excellent stress reduction tool. Research has found that caregivers who exercise regularly also have less depression, anxiety, anger and lower blood pressure than caregivers who don't. Taking care of yourself will help you continue to take care of your loved one. Remember to do some things that are helpful and healthful, or you may not be able to do anything at all.



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www.themonarchcenter.com

VOLUNTEER CONNECTIONS RSVP

"An Invitation to Make a Difference"

Spring into Volunteering!

Spring is a great time to start new projects. Here are a few in Cumberland County you might want to consider:

- Share your fitness expertise with a seniors' group. Moderate exercise—some simple dance moves and the like are beneficial and fun for this group. Share your talent and skill in this project.
- Join a growing group of caring people who are training to help people in difficult times in their lives, by becoming a TIP () volunteer. An in depth training is provided to volunteers who would be called to emergency situations involving emotional and practical support to victims. Caring makes a difference!
- Become a Customer Satisfaction Survey Caller for an organization working with visually handicapped persons. The volunteer should have good phone skills and will have trained on the interview set questions.

- Are crafts your thing? Your crafting skills will be shared to enhance programs in many facilities. Consider basic art work, flower arranging or a craft you would enjoy sharing.
- Transportation is a BIG need for seniors. Delivering Meals on Wheels, grocery shopping for shut-ins, or taking people to a doctor's appointment etc. are the major needs. One would need a car that a senior could access and a good driving record.
- If you are interested in becoming a Medicare Counselor, basic training is being offered in May and August of this year. Call to register for the training.
Call or send an e-mail to Priscilla Greene at pgreene@smaaa.org or phone 207-396-6521 to discover more details on a variety of many other opportunities.

- Volunteer to have conversations with people learning English, and be the key to their success!
- Volunteer to help a home-bound senior, by grocery shopping, or delivering Meals on Wheels.

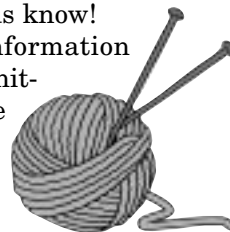
For more information about these and many more opportunities, call Cynthia Bastarache 207-396-6595 or email at cbastarache@smaaa.org.

Calling all Knitters!

The RSVP Home Knitters program has a new name. We are now the SMAA Knitters Club. For current RSVP Knitters, nothing will change. We will now be welcoming all volunteers to help us address the increasing needs in York and Cumberland Counties. We need hats and mittens for children and warm lap robes for seniors. Our volunteer knitters make a huge impact, and help people stay warm year after year. This past year, our 48 dedicated volunteer knitters helped us to donate 1,002 hats, 547 pairs of mittens, and 48 lap robes to people in the community. If you like to knit, and want to help your community for the 2013 year, we want to talk to you!!

We are also looking for yarn donations. Our Knitters use 4-ply washable yarn, preferably in bright colors! If you have any yarn to donate, please let us know!

For more information about the SMAA Knitters Club, please call 207-396-6525.



...And in York County:

- Volunteer to tutor adults with literacy or computer skills.
- Volunteer as a driver to give rides to cancer patients to and from their treatments and therapies.
- Volunteer as a docent or help in the gift shop at a local museum.
- Volunteer some of your time to visit, do crafts, or play a game with a senior.
- Help a non-profit by providing assistance with marketing or grant writing.
- Volunteer as a musician or performer to a variety of different audiences.
- Help someone spruce up their resume, and get ready for a job interview.

Welcome New Volunteers!

In December and January, 43 new volunteers were welcomed into Volunteer Services and RSVP! Some of their names are listed below:

- Victoria Chicon
- Velva Coffman
- Carol Copeland
- Deborah Drew
- Cindy Durgin
- Alice Flanagan
- Nancy Gunzelman
- Larry Hall
- Dianne Kelley
- Pam Kinner
- Laurie Lawrence
- Rebecca Leaming
- Mary Lowery
- Anne Mayer
- Charles McNutt
- Barbara Mileski
- Lindsay Monn
- Kate Morey
- Joan Morton
- Leonard Orsini
- Janet Palmer
- Betsy Pope
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From Jo Dill's Notebook

2013 Registration

Maine Senior Games registration packets will be in the mail the end of April. Our online registration will be ready for March 15th. Check out the website for online registration or to download a form. www.mainesgames.org After several years at the same price, our registration fees will have to go up. The cost for renting venues, officials, timing companies, snacks and shirts continue to rise. The initial fee will be \$35 for two sports. There may be an additional fee depending on the sport. Many states are accepting only online registrations and although we still accept mail in forms it makes my life easier if you register online (it is also a little cheaper to register online). You may register online and still pay by check!



2013 Schedule of Events

The following is a tentative schedule and the times are subject to change. Events may be added.

- 5 K Road Race:** June 2, Scarborough HS, 1pm, Sunday
- Men's Softball:** June 22, Wainwright Fields, South Portland, 9am, Saturday
- Track & Field:** June 29, Scarborough HS, 10am, Saturday, (Rain date: June 30)
- Tennis:** August 14, Women's Singles/Men's Doubles 9am, Mixed Doubles 1pm, Racket/Fitness, Wednesday
- Tennis:** August 15, Women's Doubles, Men's Singles, 9am, Racket/Fitness, Thursday
- Horseshoes:** August 17, Deering Oaks, Portland, 9am, Saturday, (Rain date: Aug. 18)
- Triathlon:** August 18, Tri for Preservation, Cape Elizabeth, 7:30 am, Sunday
- Golf:** August 19, Nonesuch River, Scarborough, 8:30am, Monday
- Archery:** August 25, Lakeside Archery, North Yarmouth, 9am, Sunday
- Cycling:** September 8, Kennebunkport Bicycle Co, 9am, Sunday
- Basketball (Women's):** September 14, Cape Elizabeth HS, Cape Elizabeth, 8:30am, Saturday
- Hot Shot/Foul Shoot:** September 14, Cape Elizabeth HS, Cape Elizabeth, 3, Saturday
- Basketball (Men's):** September 15, Cape Elizabeth HS, Cape Elizabeth, 9, Sunday
- Swimming:** September 15, Cape Elizabeth HS, Cape Elizabeth, 10am, Sunday
- Bowling Candlepin:** Singles/Doubles: September 19, Big 20, Scarborough, 10am/1pm, Thursday
- Table Tennis:** September 20, Pineland YMCA, 5pm, Friday
- Racquetball:** September 21, Racket/Fitness, Portland, 9am, Saturday
- Pickleball:** September 28, Men's/Women's Doubles, South Portland Community Center, 9am, Saturday
- Pickleball:** September 29, Mixed Doubles (Men/women single if time) South Portland CC, noon, Sunday

Medical Support

For the third year, Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Associates of Scarborough and Sanford will provide medical support for many of the 2013 Maine Senior Games events. Your support of the Maine Senior Games is appreciated and our athletes feel safer knowing you are with us!!



Sponsorships for 2013

Thanks so much to Goodwin's Motor Group for their Silver Sponsorship and to Falmouth Orthopaedic Center for their Bronze sponsorship. Your continued sponsorship is very much appreciated.



National Senior Games

Over 60 athletes from Maine have registered for the National Senior Games in Cleveland, OH. The events are from July 19th-Aug. 1st. The National Games are every other year and held in a major city in the US. Pictured below at the National Senior Games annual meeting are: Jerry LeVasseur, Deb Smith and Jo. Jerry and Deb are on the National Senior Games Board as well as the Maine Senior Games Advisory Board.



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Twenty-three orthopaedic surgeons from seven separate practices have joined forces to provide orthopaedic surgery services to Mercy Hospital and its affiliates. They work together as a team—on each patient and case—to make certain they provide the very best care possible—from initial referral to registration to surgery and post-operative care.

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As one example, if you've had joint replacement in another hospital, we can provide rehabilitation for you close to your home and family, at Bridgton Hospital.

The Skilled Swing Bed Program allows you to receive skilled rehabilitation right here, in your own community, at Bridgton Hospital.

Why choose Bridgton Hospital for your Swing Bed care?

- All private patient rooms with private bath, cable TV, free internet access and phone
- Access to the Central Maine Medical Group's extensive network of medical specialists
- Physicians are on-site 24 hours a day/7 days a week
- RN care, around the clock
- Rehabilitation services available 7 days a week
- Lab, radiology (x-ray), pharmacy and other services right on-site

The Swing Bed Program may include:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Physical Therapy | Nutrition Therapy |
| Occupational Therapy | Psychosocial Support |
| Speech Therapy | Comfort Care |
| Wound Management | Longterm Antibiotic Treatment |
| Respiratory Therapy | |

How is Swing Bed care paid for?

Swing Bed care is often covered by Medicare, Medicaid and many private insurances. Bridgton Hospital's social worker or case manager will discuss your coverage prior to your transfer from the acute care setting to the Skilled Swing Bed program.

For further information about this program we encourage you to contact **Kathleen Wohlenberg, LSW, Director of Guest Relations and Case Management, at 207-647-6149.**



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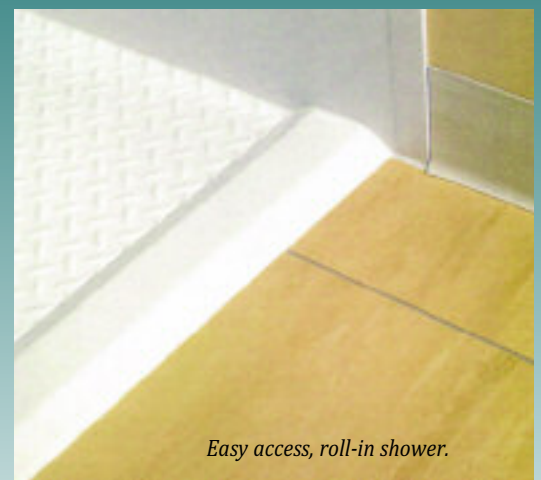
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