2006 In Review:
From the Board Chairperson
and President

We are so proud of our new name AgeOptions, which officially replaced Suburban Area Agency on Aging this past year. Once the trademark process was complete, our vision of a new identity finally became a reality and the staff, Board of Directors and Advisory Council immediately embraced the new image of the organization. As we share the story of our rebranding journey, we are extremely pleased with the positive feedback from our many constituents and partners and the acknowledgment that we are in the forefront of positive change in the Aging Network.

The year 2006 stands as a major milestone for the advancement of the principles established by the Agency in 1974. The Older Adult Services Advisory Council issued a report on how Illinois can reform the long term care system with greater emphasis on home and community based senior services. This emphasis was supported with new state funding for homemaker wages, transportation for adult day services, comprehensive case management, emergency home response systems, flexible senior services, increased funding for home delivered meals, and critical infrastructure improvements for the statewide aging network.

Other highpoints during the year greatly enhanced the expansion of our role in coordinating and providing options and services. The Older Americans Act was re-enacted by Congress; AgeOptions was awarded grants for continuation of the Senior Medicare Patrol and for the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) SMP Integration program; we were selected as one of three Illinois area agencies on aging for a new AoA health promotion grant spearheaded by the Illinois Department of Public Health to demonstrate a Chronic Disease Management training program and Aging Well advanced to the implementation stages of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s national program, Community Partnership for Older Adults.

And there was the tsunami of all social service programs – Medicare Part D/Illinois Cares Rx. The forward thinking of the Chicago philanthropic community led by the Michael Reese Health Trust, Retirement Research Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust and the National Council on Aging, resulted in a better coordinated and more effective Chicago metropolitan area effort to reach older adults and disabled persons with current information, and hands-on assistance in applying for a Medicare Part D Plans and the Illinois Cares Rx “wrap around” program.

Nothing was as effective or as important as the communities’ responses to the needs of their citizens, even though designated federal funds were often diverted from supporting the network. With that lesson learned, the Illinois Department on Aging made sure to provide over $1.5 million to help with the 2007 enrollment period.

With gratitude to the Board Directors, Advisory Council, staff of AgeOptions, and our partners in aging, we are dedicated to keeping up our momentum in 2008.

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Chairperson of the Board of Directors

Jonathan Lavin  
President and Chief Executive Officer
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We extend our gratitude to our retiring board members
Tom Curin, Dom Rossi, David Wells, Silvia Zaldivar, Helen Kwan, Ken Anderson and Michael Weis.

We extend our gratitude to

Celebrating Diversity in Aging:
Across race, ethnicity, culture, language, experience and lifestyle
The second fund-raiser in June, “Celebrating Diversity in Aging” was a tremendous success for AgeOptions, thanks to the generosity of our guests, sponsors and volunteers. This event, held at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois in downtown Chicago, honored the variety and richness of the 130 suburban Cook County communities we serve and raised more than $40,000. The proceeds allow for expansion of our Language Assistance Program and providing information and help to limited English speaking persons.

Our guest of honor for the evening was Terry Savage, Chicago’s leading consumer affairs journalist and best-selling author of “The Savage Number: How Much Money Do You Need to Retire?” Terry was informational and engaging – embracing the professional characteristics of a leading organization for older persons.

A special thank you goes to our event chairpersons, Fred Karutz and Murray Gordon, Advisory Council chairperson Aimee Sordelli, all of the members of the Celebrating Independence Committee and the many volunteers who worked countless hours to make this event a huge success.

Partnerships:
Helping to Make Medicare Work
The new Medicare Part D prescription drug program took effect for the first time in January 2006. Everyone with Medicare (about 1.6 million people in Illinois) had to make decisions about
their individual coverage, including whether to enroll in one of the new plans and if so, which of the more than 60 available plans to choose. New federal and state programs became available to help people with lower incomes to pay for the new plans. AgeOptions played an ongoing leadership role in educating and assisting Medicare consumers and their families, counselors and policymakers during this turbulent period.

During this second year of the Make Medicare Work Coalition, AgeOptions worked in partnership with Progress Center for Independent Living and Health & Disability Advocates to provide consumer-oriented information and advocacy. The Make Medicare Work Coalition grew to include more than 200 active organizations. Members include community-based service providers for older adults, people with disabilities and chronic diseases; advocates; and representatives from state and federal agencies and elected officials’ offices. The Coalition met regularly to share the latest information and discuss issues, conducted trainings; delivered and hundreds of public presentations. Materials produced were widely disseminated. The Coalition targeted groups of consumers for special attention, including people with limited English proficiency, with mental illness, and with HIV/AIDS.

Funding from the national Access to Benefits Coalition/National Council on Aging enabled AgeOptions, Chicago Department on Aging and the Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging to continue as leaders of the Chicago Area Access to Benefits Coalition, focusing on identifying and enrolling people with lower incomes into the federal Extra Help and state Illinois Cares Rx programs. AgeOptions successfully advocated for the continuation of state funding to support local agencies’ ability to provide outreach, information and personal assistance to consumers with Medicare Part D and state programs.

White House Conference on Aging: Advocating for Older Adults

The White House Conference on Aging traditionally provides a compass for direction of the nation over the coming decade. This year’s Conference, held in December 2005, was carefully orchestrated to promote individual responsibility, and ended as a resounding proponent of community responsibility and government involvement in the aging of America.

The top priority was the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. It advocated for advanced planning to meet the workers shortage for geriatric care; expanded mental health services for the aging of America; home and community based long term care with less reliance on long term care facility services; community preparedness for the aging society; and, a recommitment to Social Security and Medicare programs as currently conceived.

Delegates to the Conference, including AgeOptions President Jonathan Lavin, declared their support in the vital role of the federal government in the aging of our citizenry. Mr. Lavin was a strong contributor to the leadership of the Conference, co-chairing issue selection meetings, and helping to disseminate national information to fellow Illinois delegates.

Throughout the year, the entire Aging Network and supporters of older adults put in long hours, advocating for the reauthorization of the Act. Their remarkable efforts paid off and on October 16, 2006, President Bush signed into law the 16th Older Americans Act.

Aging Well: Creating Elder-Friendly Communities

Aging Well became one of 16 national partnerships to receive a prestigious $750,000 grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its national program Community Partnerships for Older Adults. The grant is being used over the next four years to advance the community’s plan to support the independence of older adults and enhance and expand long term care services for older adults in the greater Lyons Township area.
The Aging Well Governing Council, co-chaired by Jim Durkan and Jonathan Lavin, oversee the strategic direction of the project. The four primary goals of Aging Well are:

- Access to information and services
- Education about planning for the future
- Quality direct care workforce
- Knowledge to make decisions about Long Term Care options

In May, Aging Well had the honor of hosting Dr. George Maddox as the Annual Meeting keynote speaker, we announced the receipt of our implementation grant and celebrated our accomplishments of the past year. He also spoke at a special reception for AgeOptions staff, volunteers and funded agencies. Dr. Maddox is an engaging speaker and human being and is responsible for a number of landmark long-term care longitudinal studies.

An integral part of Aging Well is the 12 volunteer Community Action Teams, working to identify and find solutions to local issues. The results of their efforts include telephone reassurance call programs, health fairs, senior discount days, computer classes, educational presentations and a theater program for older adults.

Aging Well, a project of AgeOptions, is a grass-roots partnership-driven initiative, comprised of hundreds of older adults and over 130 community organizations. Aging Well is supported locally by Community Memorial Foundation and the Township of Lyons.

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**Senior Medicare Patrol: Fighting Fraud**

AgeOptions administers the Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program, supported by a grant from the Administration on Aging. Through this program AgeOptions raises awareness of Medicare and Medicaid fraud and promotes prevention activities within Illinois. Over the past year, we have seen remarkable results, thanks in part to collaborative activities with the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, the Illinois Treasurer’s Office, the Senior Health Insurance Program and local agencies.

The SMP Volunteer Corp reached 10,815 people through community events

The SMP Volunteer Corp was highlighted in the media, reaching over 2 million people

Through the Integration Grant, the Illinois Attorney General’s Office recruited 346 volunteers to share the SMP message

AgeOptions was awarded funding in July 2006 to administer the Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol project statewide. To ensure its success, AgeOptions is partnering with the 12 Illinois Area Agencies, and two statewide organizations, the Coalition for Limited English Speaking Elderly and the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living.

In September we were one of fifteen agencies to be awarded funding for the Senior Medicare Patrol Integration Project, which focuses on outreach to the homebound population nationwide. Partnering with us are Dominick’s, Meals On Wheels Association of America, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.

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**Did you know:**

- The Red Tape Cutters program helped close to 10,000 older persons and leveraged over $14 million in benefits for older persons from a modest $230,000 state investment in the suburban Cook County program.

- Over 300,000 meals were served at community-based dining sites throughout suburban Cook County last year. More than 570,000 meals were delivered to older adults who were homebound.

- AgeOptions contacted more than 3,800 organizations throughout the metropolitan Chicago area to confirm information about services listed in the Aging Resource Center.
database. This enables us to respond to requests for assistance as we help connect older adults with options and services.

Calls to AgeOptions from people requesting help with their benefit coverage went from 2,379 in FY 05 to 9,385 in FY 06. This increase can be attributed to the introduction of the Medicare Prescription Drug program. This doesn’t include the thousands of calls our network received. Thanks to all the organizations, staff and volunteers who helped so many during the enrollment program.

Through the Home Again program 17 clients have moved from nursing homes back into the community. Starting in July 2006, we expanded the program to include four additional townships: Barrington, Hanover, Palatine, and Wheeling.

The Agency’s workforce included 9 interns and students, and 2 VISTA employees during FY 2006. We are pleased to have the opportunity to introduce them to the aging network and grateful to benefit from their time and energy. AgeOptions is able to help clients in up to 150 different languages, thanks to our association with Tele-Interpreters.

Last fiscal year participants in the Senior Community Service Employment Program worked 49,672 hours at non-profit and government organizations throughout suburban Cook County; 18,944 hours of these hours were specifically in service to the elderly community including two Program Aids assigned to AgeOptions.

Outreach activities over the past year reached more than 12,000 individuals through presentations held at local libraries, senior centers, township offices, churches, universities and civic clubs. Audience members included older adults, elected officials, medical professionals, and colleagues in aging.

AgeOptions funds 15 community based agencies that provide a variety of services for caregivers, including support groups, respite, and workshops about caregiver issues. During the past year, almost 4,000 caregivers benefited from these services.

Recognized as a leader in the field of Aging, 15 AgeOptions staff shared their knowledge and expertise at local, regional and national workshops and conferences. In addition, Mr. Lavin served on the Host Committee for the n4a Conference in Chicago this past August, and is co-chair of the 2007 American Society on Aging/National Council on Aging Conference.

Diane Slezak, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of AgeOptions, is celebrating her 30th anniversary with the Agency. Thank you, Diane, for your leadership and commitment to the older adults of our community.

Looking Ahead:
Our Future Direction

AgeOptions is recognized as a leader in developing and helping to deliver community-based resources and options that respond to the changes in aging of our communities and those who turn to us for support and guidance.

As an Area Agency on Aging we provide a core set of programs and services that gives us the structure and direction to perform our advocacy, planning, coordinating and grant-making functions.

As we embrace our new identity, AgeOptions will seek out new opportunities and ways to reach the older adults and those who care for them. In order to be responsive and fully prepared we will:

- Develop our system of services so that it is more comprehensive and culturally competent;
- Secure diversified funding and resources in support of these services;
Promote access to services by raising awareness and increasing our visibility and that of our network; build strong relationships with our funded agencies and other community partners; and advocate for the needs and rights of older adults and those who care for them.

In Appreciation for Your Generous Support

The following lists donors, volunteers and staff who contributed $100 or more to AgeOptions between October 2005 and September 2006.

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Emily Derfler
Ray Hoehne

We have tried to include all FY 2006 donors and sincerely apologize for any omissions or errors. Thank you for your understanding and for your generosity to AgeOptions.

AGEOPTIONS

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