

# AGEOPTIONS NOW

FALL 2009

Volume I, Issue 2

A MESSAGE FROM



As we prepare for the fifth annual AgeOptions fundraiser on September 17, I want to express my gratitude and that of all the members of the Board of Directors to our generous sponsors and donors.

Your gifts help **AgeOptions** make a difference in the lives of older adults and those who care for them.

*Celebrating Aging* is an appropriate name and theme for our 2009 event as AgeOptions celebrated its 35th anniversary in June.

For 35 years every day has been a celebration of aging as our dedicated staff, Advisory Council, Board of Directors, and community partners plan, fund, coordinate and advocate on behalf of older adults residing in suburban Cook County.

We have seen both tremendous growth and increasing need in the older population we serve. At a time when dollars are short, *Celebrating Aging* will help AgeOptions link older adults with vital resources. Our most heartfelt thanks to the donors and sponsors who make that possible.



**Frederick P. Karutz**  
Chairperson  
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General Manager  
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## Celebrating Aging Sept. 17

**G**enerous sponsors, supporters and donors are ensuring *Celebrating Aging*, the **AgeOptions** 2009 fundraising event, will be a success. The fifth annual fundraiser will be held Thursday, September 17, from 6 to 9 p.m. in the Winter Garden of the Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago.

The event will include a silent auction, raffle, entertainment and hors d'oeuvres, and will feature Merri Dee, a long-time champion of charitable work. She is one of the first African-American women to anchor broadcast news in Illinois. Ms. Dee is also committed to aging issues as a member of the AARP Illinois Executive Council.



Merri Dee

*Celebrating Aging* salutes the strengths, diversity and experience of older adults, while paying tribute to the community agencies, local governments and others committed to the well-being of the older members of our communities. Linda Siegel chairs the event and Carla J. Rozycki is co-chair. Both are members of the AgeOptions Board of Directors.

### Our Sponsors

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, a Platinum sponsor again this year, leads the list of sponsors to date. BCBSIL also supports the AgeOptions Take Charge of Your Health program.

Other sponsors as of this writing are:

Gold: Jenner & Block, MAGA Ltd., and Carla J. Rozycki and Clarence O. Redman.

Silver: Addus HealthCare, Advocate Health Care, Chicago Housing Authority, Leslie Jones and Ian Kirschmann, Michael and Kathy Kotel, Jon and Robin Lavin, Donna and Vern Moore, Perkins+Will, Diane Slezak and Dana Havranek, and the Tabernacki and Hetrovicz families.

Bronze: Arlene Blaha, Christopher Burke Engineering, Nick Cetwinski, Esq., Common Sense Solutions, Community Bank Oak Park River Forest, Mary Coonda, Margaret Hastings, Lake Michigan Benefit Associates, Oakton Place, Chicago Ridge Mayor Eugene Siegel, Sikich LLP and Stone, McGuire & Siegel.

Comcast is the Premier Communications sponsor again this year.

The Premier Community Partner is Project P.R.O.T.E.C.T. (Promoting Responsibility and Obligation to Enhance Community Togetherness), which will donate all proceeds of its 5K run/walk in Chicago Ridge to AgeOptions.

## PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

**Caring Together, Living Better**

**C**aring Together, Living Better, the new AgeOptions initiative in the south suburbs, has scheduled its kickoff event for Tuesday, September 29. The project involves south suburban churches and organizations in the development of programs and services for family members and friends responsible for the care of older adults.

Caring Together, Living Better is a partnership-based program funded by a three-year, \$515,357 grant to **AgeOptions** from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. The program is designed to be community owned, with churches and organizations that serve low-income older adults creating programs and services to help caregivers handle the many challenges they face every day.

**Community Leadership Council**

In collaboration with AgeOptions, Caring Together, Living Better will be guided by a leadership council of south suburban residents, community members and leaders including Catholic Charities South Suburban Senior Services, Metropolitan Family Services Southwest and CJE Senior Life.



Apostle Carl White

Local churches and organizations selected to participate in the program will be announced at the kickoff. Speakers include Apostle Carl White of Victory Christian Assembly Church in Markham and State Rep. Will Davis.

AgeOptions will distribute funds to the churches and organizations, which will design and implement support programs meeting the needs of caregivers in their communities. The projects will include such things as volunteer transportation to take older adults to medical appointments while caregivers are at work, support teams of volunteers to help caregivers with errands, and volunteer respite programs to give caregivers a break from their duties.

**Strengthening Caregiver Support**

AgeOptions will also use grant and local funding to develop an enhanced caregiver support system for the south suburban region. This includes developing outreach and training materials designed to meet the needs of African-American caregivers, along with increasing the availability and capacity of formal respite care and other existing services that support caregivers.



To assist the selected participants, AgeOptions has hired a caregiver community organizing specialist, Katrina Garrett, and recruited Kerri Metcalf, a volunteer with AmeriCorps VISTA, the national service program designed to fight poverty. They will work closely with the churches and organizations to help them develop and implement programs, recruit volunteers, create outreach materials, recruit caregivers to participate in the program, collect evaluation data and refine their projects.

**Raise Awareness of Caregiver Issues**

In addition, staff and partners of Caring Together, Living Better are working to involve local hospitals, government officials, service providers, business people, caregivers and older adults to raise awareness of caregiver issues and available services. This involvement is key to continuing support of the caregiver programs when the grant funding ends.

For more information about Caring Together, Living Better or the kickoff event, contact AgeOptions Countywide Caregiver Coordinator Sarah Stein at (708)383-0258 or [sarah.stein@ageoptions.org](mailto:sarah.stein@ageoptions.org).

## Take Charge Classes Empower Older Adults

**A**geOptions celebrated the success of Take Charge of Your Health: Live Well, Be Well on July 31. The event recognized class leaders and community partners who made it possible to reach more than 550 older adults with chronic health conditions since the program began in 2006.

Take Charge of Your Health: Live Well, Be Well is a free, interactive series of workshops open to all older adults who want to learn to thrive, not simply survive, with chronic health conditions. Classes are continually offered throughout suburban Cook County and are made possible by a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging via the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Class leaders and community partners shared their stories and experiences at the July event.

“It’s wonderful to see people get excited about feeling they can take control of their lives,” said Nancy Frenk, health promotion coordinator at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights. The hospital has offered Take Charge of

Your Health: Live Well, Be Well classes at the Arlington Heights Senior Center since August 2007. “Sometimes chronic conditions make people feel helpless,” Frenk added. “This is a wonderful way to empower people.”

For information on class start dates, locations and languages, contact AgeOptions Health and Diversity Coordinator Maria Oquendo-Scharneck at (708)383-0258 or maria.oquendo-scharneck@ageoptions.org.



Class leaders and community partners shared their stories and experiences at the July 31 event

## Shining a Light on Elder Abuse

**A**s the economy continues to strain people’s finances and nerves, an increasing number of older adults become victims of physical and emotional abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

Some older people who can no longer afford to live alone may have to move in with family. Conversely, relatives who lose their jobs may move into an older person’s home. Stress often results in either situation and can lead to abuse or financial exploitation of the older person.

Elder abuse exists in good times as well as bad, a fact AgeOptions strives to bring to the attention of both the general public and professionals who serve this age group.

In Illinois, more than 10,000 incidents of elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation were reported last year; of this number, the AgeOptions network of elder abuse prevention agencies received 1,742 reports. For every reported case, experts have estimated that 10 cases go undocumented.

More than half the elder abuse cases reported in Illinois involve financial exploitation, according to AgeOptions Elder Rights Specialist Katie Schmit. “Financial exploitation can mean the difference between being able to afford to stay in your home and having to go to a nursing home,” she said.

Financial exploitation comes in many forms, including theft, forging the older adult’s name on checks, misusing power of attorney and transferring property deeds without informed consent to steal an older person’s home.

An adult child living at home is also a risk factor for financial exploitation, Schmit said. “When an adult child lives at home his or her needs may be met at the expense of the parent’s.”

Isolation, whether it is done by family or “friends,” is a form of abuse because perpetrators make an older person believe they are the only people he or she can depend on. Isolation is often connected to financial exploitation.

Schmit advises older adults to consult an attorney to be sure any documents are strong enough to protect them. Power of attorney, for example, should transfer to someone else only when the older person is unable to make decisions.

Victims of abuse and anyone who observes or suspects abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of an older person are urged to call the Illinois Elder Abuse Hotline at (866)800-1409 or for TTY users (888)206-1327.

For additional information or to speak to an expert about elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation, contact Katie Schmit at katie.schmit@ageoptions.org or (708)383-0258.

## SMP Program Fights Fraud

The SMP program operated by **AgeOptions** since 1995 has begun a new three-year cycle with a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging. The goal of SMP, formerly known as Senior Medicare Patrol, is to empower consumers to prevent health care fraud, waste and abuse through outreach and education. Partner agencies and volunteers are central to the program's success.

AgeOptions has coordinated the SMP program since it began in 1995 as a demonstration project in five states. Since 1997, SMP has saved more than \$105 million for Medicare, Medicaid and beneficiaries throughout Illinois.

SMP informs older adults about Medicare and Medicaid fraud such as billing for services never received and billing for more expensive services than what was provided. Coordinators point out that while individuals don't have to pay these bills, scams result in rising costs for everyone.

### Educates Consumers

The program also provides information and updates on other types of fraud, especially those targeting older people. In both presentations and a weekly email Fraud Alert, SMP warns about new and continuing scams. Among these are jury duty scams, fake magazine salespeople, calls from someone pretending to be a grandchild who needs money to get out of a jam, and people who attempt to gain entry to homes by posing as utility workers.

Working with agencies and volunteers throughout the state, SMP in 2008 provided fraud information to 17,040 people at 182 community events and reached another 6,751 individuals through 252 group presentations.

Also in 2008, the program assisted 185 individuals with fraud issues, resolved 203 inquiries about fraud and assisted consumers with 34 complex fraud problems.

SMP takes reports of health care fraud, working with individuals to fill out reports and submit them to either Medicare investigative contractors or the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. Anyone who calls about a consumer fraud issue will be connected to the appropriate reporting agency.

To achieve statewide outreach, AgeOptions partners with agencies that serve older adults and persons with disabilities. New partners this year are the Illinois Attorney General's Office Senior Sleuth program and four centers for independent living: IMPACT Center for Independent Living, Southern Illinois Center for Independent Living, Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living and Springfield Center for Independent Living.

Other partners are: all 13 Illinois Area Agencies on Aging; Catholic Charities – Lake County; Catholic

Charities – Northwest; South Suburban Senior Services – Catholic Charities; Senior Services Associates; the Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly; and the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living.

AgeOptions provides a central intake line for the Illinois SMP program. To report health care fraud, get more information on SMP or receive the Fraud Alert email, contact AgeOptions Healthcare Consumer Protection Coordinator Erin Weir at (800)699-9043 or [erin.weir@ageoptions.org](mailto:erin.weir@ageoptions.org). Additional information is available at the SMP website, [illinoissmp.org](http://illinoissmp.org).

## Fall Run Benefits AgeOptions

Join us again this year for the Project P.R.O.T.E.C.T. 5K run/walk in Chicago Ridge. All proceeds will be donated to **AgeOptions**, so come out at 8 a.m. sharp on Sunday, October 4, join our staff and Board of Directors and get some exercise for a good cause.

The start and finish line is at Freedom Activity Center, 6252 Birmingham in Chicago Ridge.

Last year the 5K raised more than \$4,000 for AgeOptions programs, so bring your friends, your kids, your dog, and sign up pledgers to raise more funds for your participation. There will be a prize for the participant who raises the most money.

All donations will benefit older adults in suburban Cook County through programs such as Take Charge of Your Health, elder abuse prevention, home-delivered and group meals, caregiver support services, and health care fraud prevention.

Each participant will receive a T-shirt, and trophies will go to the first place male and female finishers in several categories. The registration fee is \$15 for adults and teens and \$10 for children 12 and under.

Registration forms are available online at [chicagoridge.org](http://chicagoridge.org), at the Chicago Ridge Police Department, 10425 S. Ridgeland Ave.; Frontier Park Fieldhouse, 9807 S. Sayre; and Freedom Activity Center. For information, call Charity Mitchell in the Chicago Ridge Police Department, (708)425-7831, or visit AgeOptions website, [ageoptions.org](http://ageoptions.org).

Chicago Ridge Chief of Police Tim Baldermann initiated Project P.R.O.T.E.C.T. (Promoting Responsibility and Obligation to Enhance Community Togetherness) 10 years ago as a way for people in the community to help others through different types of events.

AgeOptions is honored to be chosen to receive the proceeds of the 5K run/walk and we hope you will join us and the other participants in Chicago Ridge on Sunday, October 4 – rain or shine!

## Stimulus Funds Expand Nutrition Programs

Thousands of older adults will benefit from new or expanded nutrition programs, thanks to the \$626,850 in federal stimulus funds AgeOptions received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Some will receive home-delivered or congregate meals for the first time, while others will receive weekend meals or a second weekday serving time.

Since the funds are available only between July 1, 2009, and September 30, 2010, AgeOptions invited more than 200 agencies to apply for nutrition grants. Only two months later we awarded a total of 25 grants to 17 agencies.

### Safety and Nutrition Requirements

AgeOptions held grant writing sessions during the application period. Grants specialists, along with Dietitian Ellin Learned, worked closely with the applicants to ensure their proposals met stringent safety and nutrition requirements. They will continue to assist and monitor the grant recipients to be certain all the new nutrition programs can begin operating this summer.

A major goal in using the stimulus funds is to fulfill the AgeOptions commitment to ensure services are available to underserved populations. Seven agencies will offer new programs to older adults who are unable to regularly enjoy the companionship of others who share their culture or language.

### Participating Restaurants

Some older adults will have their meals in restaurants that work with community agencies to create special menu choices for them. In Melrose Park, for example, a local Mexican restaurant will deliver meals five evenings a week to Mt. Carmel Parish, which serves Hispanic older adults. Arab American Family Services is establishing a program at a local Middle Eastern restaurant, and Wheeling Township is beginning a three-day-a-week program for Hispanic, Polish and Korean older adults.

In addition, several agencies are adding shelf-stable meals that home-delivered meal clients can use when emergencies prevent delivery; others are using the grant funds to expand existing programs and provide extra meals during the week or on weekends.

AgeOptions hopes to continue some of the temporary nutrition programs when the stimulus funding ends. However, because the funding is temporary, all agencies receiving grants are required to explain to their clients that the special nutrition program will end next year.



### Tickets

For information on tickets and sponsorships for our Celebrating Aging fundraiser on September 17, please call AgeOptions at (708)383-0258 or visit the Celebrating Aging website at [ageoptions.org](http://ageoptions.org). Ticket prices and sponsorship levels remain the same as last year.

Tickets are \$100 and may be purchased online at [ageoptions.org](http://ageoptions.org).

### Sponsorships

Platinum	\$5,000
Gold	\$2,500
Silver	\$1,000
Bronze	\$500

### Silent Auction

Donations are welcome for the silent auction. Our past fundraising events have featured lively bidding over a variety of items including jewelry, sports memorabilia and tickets, art, vacation stays, yoga classes, children's items, golf outings, restaurant gift cards, spa services and wine.

To make a donation, or to learn more about our silent auction, contact Ilona Tabernacki at [ilona.tabernacki@ageoptions.org](mailto:ilona.tabernacki@ageoptions.org) or phone (708)383-0258. All donations must be received at AgeOptions by September 10.

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## Event Honors Volunteers

**A**geOptions and our partner agencies rely on volunteers to help provide a wide range of services to older adults throughout suburban Cook County, and each year we honor some of those volunteers at an annual luncheon.

This year we will celebrate our 35th Anniversary Luncheon and Volunteer Recognition on November 10 at William Tell Banquets in Countryside. Aetna Health Plans will sponsor the event this year.

“Volunteers are key to providing vital services to the older adults in our community,” said Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president and CEO. “As AgeOptions celebrates 35 years of planning for the aging of suburban Cook County, I want to emphasize how much we appreciate the dedicated volunteers whose time and talents contribute so much to our mission of improving the quality of life for older adults. We honor those who commit their time, energy, wisdom and support to organizations serving older persons in their communities.”

“AgeOptions is also proud of the volunteers on our Board of Directors and Advisory Council,” Lavin added. “We will certainly make them a central focus of our event this year.”

All AgeOptions partner agencies are encouraged to nominate outstanding volunteers age 60 and older. For nomination forms, email Karen Abee at [karen.abee@ageoptions.org](mailto:karen.abee@ageoptions.org) or call (708)383-0258.



**AgeOptions NOW** is a publication of AgeOptions, a nonprofit organization. As the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County, AgeOptions serves 130 communities within 30 townships.

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