

AGEOPTIONS NOW

WINTER 2011

A MESSAGE FROM



The past year was one of the most challenging, yet rewarding years for all of us who are passionate about the security and wellbeing of older adults. As a result of the economic downturn, many older residents of suburban Cook County approached AgeOptions and our community partners with new and challenging problems related to their financial wellbeing. And in spite of the personal impact we all felt, you graciously responded to our plea for donations to help meet their needs.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and everyone at AgeOptions, I would like to thank you for your support of vital programs and services for older adults. We were heartened by the sponsorships, donations, ticket and auction purchases at our sixth annual fundraiser, *Celebrating Aging - Making a Difference*, as well as the generous year-end gifts to AgeOptions and contributions to our Dominic Rossi scholarship fund. We recognize that you trust us to use your donations wisely and effectively, and we take our responsibility to meet your expectations very seriously.

In this newsletter, we highlight the importance of volunteers and describe areas where volunteer support is greatly needed. We invite you to take action by becoming a volunteer or by passing the information on to others.

Thank you for caring about the older adults we serve.

Tracy Bousky
Chairperson
Board of Directors
AgeOptions



Lead Advisor
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MMW Clarifies Medicare and Health Care Options

The confluence of the economic downturn and passage of the Affordable Care Act highlights the role of the Make Medicare Work Coalition (MMW) as a significant source of unbiased information on health care options for both Medicare recipients and the vulnerable pre-Medicare (55-to-64) age group.

MMW was established in 2005 when the Medicare Part D prescription drug plan was introduced.

MMW is now playing an important role in providing information about changes incorporated in health care reform. It is a primary source of information for community-based agency staff as they sort through complex information to help individuals they serve understand and take full advantage of the important new benefits and services that are available.

In addition to health care reform issues, MMW provides assistance with a full range of public and private health care and prescription drug programs, including Medicare, Medicare Part D, Medicare Savings Programs, Medigap, Medicaid and Illinois Cares Rx. Its programmatic and advocacy goal is to ensure older adults and people with disabilities in Illinois have meaningful benefit program options, that they receive practical information on what is available, and assistance when enrolling in the programs.

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MMW Clarifies Medicare and Health Care Options

The MMW Coalition was established with the support of three foundations: The Chicago Community Trust, Michael Reese Health Trust and The Retirement Research Foundation. It is now moving into its seventh year as a resource for people with Medicare, the counselors who assist them, and policymakers who design the health care and prescription drug programs they use.

AgeOptions co-leads MMW in partnership with Progress Center for Independent Living (an agency that supports people with disabilities to live independently in the community) and Health & Disability Advocates (a well-respected policy advocacy group).

The coalition was one of the first in the nation to bring together aging and disability partners to conduct public education and bring their frontline experience with consumers directly to policymakers. Through its advocacy MMW has played a significant role in the development of Illinois Cares Rx, the state's prescription drug program that provides critical support to approximately 200,000 seniors and people with disabilities in paying for their prescription drugs.

With the downturn in the economy, more people need help; many have never worked with public programs, or even know what is available. For individuals with Medicare, MMW offers public presentations such as New to Medicare, Be a Savvy Medicare Consumer, and Help Paying for Your Prescription Drugs. MMW is also working on projects to fill information gaps by developing tool-kits to assist people who have lost their jobs, retired early, or are working longer than expected. MMW is partnering with the national Medicare Rights Center on topics such as when to sign up for Medicare Part B and how Medicare works with COBRA.

To assist the growing number of people age 55 to 64 who are unable to find affordable health insurance, MMW will provide information on public programs

and resources. The program will help them seek health care services until they become eligible for Medicare or access the new Health Insurance Exchange available in 2014.

In the past three years, MMW has touched more than 400,000 Medicare consumers and their families in Illinois. The coalition has trained more than 10,000 professionals and volunteers and provides ongoing technical assistance and information to more than 650 individual MMW members. These individuals

represent approximately 250 organizations throughout the Chicago area and statewide, including social service agencies, health care providers, local, state and federal agencies, advocates, faith-based, ethnic-based and a variety of other community agencies. Contact Terri Gendel at terri.gendel@ageoptions.org to learn more about MMW.



AGEOPTIONS

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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“One Away” Video Programs to Support Older Americans Act

The National Council on Aging and AgeOptions are rolling out the national “One Away” campaign in the Chicago metropolitan area. “One Away” is a video advocacy campaign that will promote this year’s reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.



Maribeth Stein, AgeOptions outreach specialist, and Luan Mazreku, an AmeriCorps VISTA with AgeOptions, are producing the videos.

The video campaign seeks to show Illinois members of Congress and the general public that, despite how hard many older persons have worked throughout their lives, they are still one bad break (e.g. job loss, health problems, missed payments) away from falling into economic crisis. “One Away” also seeks to mobilize older Americans and others to support the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act as a proven and dependable means toward increasing their economic security.

Throughout the year, AgeOptions will produce three, three-to-five minute documentaries of older adults sharing their stories about economic security. “One Crisis Away,” “One Voice Away,” and “One Act Away” are being taped to feature elder voices for economic security. The campaign name “One Away,” captures the profound impact on the lives of older persons when there is a sudden change in their health or income in these difficult economic times. It also speaks to empowering people to take action to improve their situations.

AgeOptions is one of 14 agencies nationwide selected to receive a \$20,000 grant from the National Council on Aging to participate in “One Away.”

Volunteer Recognition Luncheon Scheduled for June 16

Please mark your calendar for the new date of the annual AgeOptions Luncheon and Volunteer Recognition on Thursday, June 16, at the William Tell Holiday Inn in Countryside.

Volunteers at agencies and organizations throughout suburban Cook County will be honored at the event for their dedication to helping older adults in their communities. The volunteers, who often are themselves older adults, provide a broad range of services benefiting seniors and their communities.

For information on nominating volunteers for this year’s recognition, please call Karen Abee at AgeOptions, (708)383-0258, (800)699-9043 or TTY (708)524-1653.

Many Ways to Make a Difference: Volunteer Opportunities Offer Challenges and Satisfaction

Volunteers are a key element of many of the programs for older adults in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions and our partner community-based senior service agencies thrive on their energy, commitment and wisdom. Without them, we would not be able to accomplish all we do.

Ask the volunteers, though, and they enthuse about how much they gain from the experience, and the satisfaction that comes with providing vital services that make it possible for older adults to remain in their homes and live their lives to the fullest.

With the wide range of services that AgeOptions and our community partners provide in numerous locations, there are volunteer opportunities for virtually anyone. We offer carefully designed opportunities that respect the skills, time and

goals of those who choose to volunteer in our service network.

“We are so grateful for the dedication and commitment of volunteers in our region, especially those who choose our services and programs to invest their valuable time and energy,” said Jonathan Lavin, AgeOptions president and CEO. “As the need for our services increases, so do the opportunities and challenges for our skilled volunteers.”

Information on five volunteer opportunities with AgeOptions and our community service network is provided below. For additional information on any of these opportunities, please call Iona Tabernacki at AgeOptions, (708)383-0258, (800)699-9043 or TTY (708)524-1653.

Board of Directors and Advisory Council

People of all ages who care about and want to contribute to the quality of life in their own community and across the region are sought to serve as volunteers on the AgeOptions Board of Directors and Advisory Council. All Board and Council members during their three-year terms are involved in the oversight of services planned and funded by AgeOptions.

The **Board of Directors** is the governing body of AgeOptions.

- It sets policy, provides strategic direction, oversees the business of the agency, contributes and secures resources for the successful operation of the agency and represents AgeOptions to a wide number of publics.
- Individuals with specialized knowledge, skills and experience are especially needed. Examples include: Corporate Representation, Business, Finance, Accounting, Law, Public Relations and Marketing, Resource Development and Board and Organizational Development.

The **Advisory Council** represents and links AgeOptions to suburban Cook County communities.

- It focuses on programmatic issues and recommends action to the Board of Directors. Council committees are often issue oriented and focused on legislation and public information.
- As required by the Older Americans Act, 50 percent of members must be over the age of 60 and include minorities, low-income individuals and those who receive services funded by AgeOptions.
- Members must also include elected officials and representatives of community-based organizations offering services to older adults. All areas of suburban Cook County must be represented.

For information and a nomination form for the Board of Directors or Advisory Council, please contact Karen Abee at (708)383-0258 or karen.abee@ageoptions.org.

Volunteer Opportunities *continued from Page 4***Economic Security Initiative**

The Economic Security Initiative is designed for older residents of suburban Cook County who are struggling in the economic downturn. The program assesses their economic needs and identifies ways to effectively meet them.

- Volunteers must be 55 or older.
- Individuals with professional experience in finance or business are especially sought.
- Volunteers will assist clients in establishing goals to help them reach economic security.
- They will be trained and may choose from several responsibilities.
- Volunteers will work at the AgeOptions office any day of the week during business hours for two to four hours a week. They are asked to commit to 12 months of service.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Luan Mazreku, (708)383-0258 or luan.mazreku@ageoptions.org.

Red Tape Cutters

Red Tape Cutters assist older adults to obtain benefits they may not know about or be able to pursue. They show clients how to improve their lives and maintain their independence by cutting through the bureaucratic red tape to secure the assistance needed to increase the quality of life for their clients.

- Volunteers are older adults.
- They receive intensive training that prepares them to answer questions and get things done for the individuals they assist.
- They will work at a local senior service agency in their area and will be supervised by a Red Tape Cutters coordinator.
- Agencies make every effort to be flexible with volunteers' schedules.

For more information or to apply for a volunteer position with Red Tape Cutters, please contact Elizabeth Lough at (708)383-0258 or elizabeth.lough@ageoptions.org.

SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol)

Relying on the skills of its volunteers, SMP educates and empowers Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries across Illinois to prevent, detect and report health care fraud.

- Volunteers must be objective in providing information to consumers and may not promote any personal or business interest.
- They receive training on the SMP program, Medicare basics and fraud and abuse.
- Program leaders do their best to match volunteers' skills to the variety of positions available, such as giving presentations on health care fraud, providing information and education at community events or locations, organizing SMP educational events, drafting letters to the editor or other media outreach and educating people one-on-one about how to prevent, detect and report health care fraud.
- Schedules are flexible.

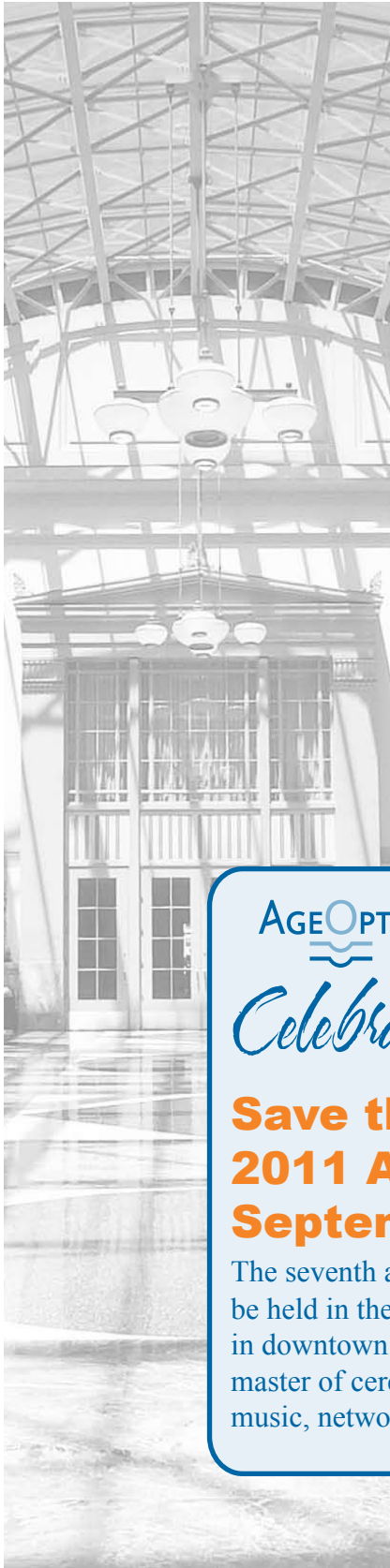
For information or to volunteer, contact Jason Echols, (708)383-0258 or jason.echols@ageoptions.org.

Benefits of Volunteering

While volunteers provide a broad range of services for older adults and their communities, volunteers themselves also benefit by sharing their knowledge, skills, time and talents. According to the U.S. Administration on Aging those benefits include:

1. Better health. Studies show that older persons who volunteer have fewer medical problems than the senior population in general.
2. Increased physical health and agility. Older adults who engage in regular physical activity have lower incidences of heart disease and diabetes and lower risk for other cardiovascular diseases.
3. Increased cognitive and mental wellbeing. Volunteering keeps the brain engaged, which helps protect the memory as people age.
4. A sense of purpose. Feeling empowered can lead to increased health and happiness.

Guests, Donors and Sponsors Made a Difference at 2010 Fundraiser



Celebrating Aging – Making a Difference, the 2010 **AgeOptions** fundraiser, filled the Winter Garden of the Harold Washington Library last September. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors, donors and guests, the sixth annual event grossed approximately \$80,000 for AgeOptions programs and services, exceeding the 2009 total by 12.5 percent.

Lisa Parker, NBC5 consumer reporter and anchor, was master of ceremonies. She encouraged lively bidding on the silent auction items and donations to the service auction pledge board where guests could designate contributions to specific programs.

The 2010 fundraiser had the support of 37 sponsors, up from 32 in 2009.

Compared to 2009, contribution totals were:

Sponsorships	20 percent higher
Ad Book	59 percent higher
Silent Auction	26 percent higher
Ticket Sales	16 percent higher
Donations	9.6 percent higher

Guests also contributed \$3,140 to programs on the pledge board.

AGEOPTIONS

Celebrating Aging

**Save the Date for the
2011 AgeOptions Fundraiser
September 15, 2011**



The seventh annual AgeOptions fundraiser, Celebrating Aging, will once again be held in the beautiful Winter Garden Room of the Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago. NBC5 News Anchor Lisa Parker will return as the master of ceremonies. Be sure to save the date for an evening of fabulous food, music, networking and the fantastic silent auction.

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