

Illinois SMP Volunteer Voice

White Crane Wellness Center Utilizes Illinois SMP Volunteers in Unique Ways



Featured here are two of White Crane Wellness Center's Illinois SMP volunteers Sharon White, on left, and Henrietta Holloway.

White Crane Wellness Center in Chicago is one of our Illinois SMP partner agencies. They have been utilizing their awesome SMP volunteers in creative ways. Chicago's SMP Volunteers (Sharon White, Henrietta Holloway, Jordan Stewart, Art Holmberg, Dorothy Young, Belen Asidao, and Bruce Nash) represent the heart and soul of the Senior Medicare Patrol Program. They facilitate interactive and engaging Senior Medicare Patrol presentations for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries throughout the diverse neighborhoods of Chicago. These volunteers promote the SMP message at senior centers, housing complexes, faith-based organizations, and other community-based venues where older adults live and naturally congregate.

The Chicago SMP Volunteers also facilitate Medicare and Medicaid fraud prevention trainings for professionals/paraprofessionals, identify new community-based host sites, assist in recruiting new SMP volunteers, and prepare SMP materials/packets for educational presentations and fairs. "The most important component of our SMP volunteer's work is serving as peer role models for all Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries" said Michael Svete, SMP Coordinator at White Crane. "Many older adults we reach experience a fear of falling for scams, are unsure of how to protect their identity, and have not been educated on how they can protect their health benefits." (Continued on page 2.)

AgeOptions and the Illinois SMP Program

AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County, coordinates the SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program for the state of Illinois. AgeOptions and our partner agencies are funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging to provide outreach and education on health care fraud through the SMP program. For more information about the Illinois SMP Program, contact AgeOptions at (800)699-9043 or visit our SMP website: www.illinoissmp.org.



Connecting Older Adults with
Community-based Resources and Options



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“Whether it’s Belen’s and Dorothy’s love of people, as personified through their warm, compassionate approach to educating individuals, or Jordan’s and Bruce’s step-by-step direction on reviewing your Medicare Summary Notices for fraudulent charges, our highly skilled older adult volunteers empower participants through their real world personal experiences and training” Michael continued.

White Crane SMP volunteers have a tremendous drive to educate Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries on the ever-changing tricks fraudsters use to collect Medicare/Medicaid numbers, Social Security numbers, and other personal information. They use creative approaches to make sure the SMP message of “Protect, Detect, and Report” resonates with the audience.

Another SMP volunteer, Henrietta, has asked each member of the audience to repeat the phrase “I will not become a victim of Medicare fraud!”

For example, Art Holmberg cuts out local newspaper articles that reflect actual cases of fraud. Art shares these articles at his SMP presentations. Another volunteer, Henrietta, has asked each member of the audience to repeat the phrase “I will not become a victim of Medicare fraud.” Sharon White and Henrietta Holloway are two of our current volunteers who have been volunteering with the Senior Medicare Patrol Program for more than 10 years! As a team and individually, they have educated thousands of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries on how to avoid becoming victims of health care fraud. As Michael states, “They are better known as our ‘One, Two Punch’ against fraud.” Their roles as SMP volunteers have grown and evolved throughout the years, and they now serve a critical part in supporting newly trained SMP volunteers. They are always willing to have new volunteers observe them during presentations and often share their knowledge of SMP and tips for engaging the audience. Sharon and Henrietta also sustain a purposeful and proactive approach with regard to providing outreach to many diverse, at-risk communities within Chicago. Further, through their decade-long work with SMP and their myriad of connections throughout the City, they play a critical role in identifying new community-based locations. To conclude, White Crane SMP Volunteers and their unwavering commitment to SMP will forever serve as an example to be replicated for years to come.

SAVE THE DATE - Special for IL SMP Volunteers: Statewide Quarterly Calls

Four times a year, the Illinois SMP Program holds a call for all SMP volunteers to join. These calls include program updates, latest calls to the IL SMP fraud line, a volunteer discussion, what’s new to Medicare, and other topics. All Illinois SMP volunteers are welcome to sit in on these calls. The next call is on Wednesday, July 24, 2013 at 10am (see your SMP Coordinator for the toll free number and other call details). Please mark your calendar and join your peers on the call. **SPECIAL: All volunteers who participate in the next Illinois SMP quarterly volunteer call on Wednesday, July 24th will be entered into a raffle to win a \$25 gas gift card. The winner will be chosen randomly after the call.**



Volunteer Spotlight on: Phil Castrogiovanni

Written by Jim Sullivan, SMP Volunteer



With a wife, four children, six stepchildren, nineteen grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and a regular cycling class,

you would think that 72 year old Phil Castrogiovanni might be a little too busy to volunteer for SMP. Think again! Phil was attracted to SMP out of a sense of outrage at how Medicare is being defrauded. He could not just sit on the sidelines. “It is all of our problem” says Phil about Medicare fraud, “we have to learn how to use the tools available to us” to detect, report and prevent fraud. Phil points out that keeping Medicare financially strong is especially important if we are to keep seniors from having to make the choice between food and prescription drugs.

Phil hopes to help solve the problem with the education he provides through the SMP program. Phil works with SMP through South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities. A former U.S. Navy hospital corpsman, Phil has been in the health care field in one way or another since 1958. Beginning as a lab tech, he has also worked in neo-natal and pediatrics before finishing his career as a clinical analyst working with computers for health care providers. That background gives him an edge when it comes to understanding the health care codes used by the providers that end up on the Medicare Summary Notices (MSN) beneficiaries receive every three months.

He uses that background to walk beneficiaries through their MSN and help them understand the services listed. He believes this knowledge not only helps beneficiaries detect Medicare fraud, but also helps them prevent identity theft.

At the seminars, seniors will often come up afterward and ask Phil, “How do you know these medical terms? How can I learn to read the summary?” By teaching seniors how to read and understand their Medicare Summary Notice, Phil believes he can protect the senior from identity theft and help reduce Medicare fraud. “I do not want seniors to be taken advantage of,” states Phil. Phil’s most recent seminar was at a senior assisted living facility. At the seminars attendees will often come up and ask Phil how they can get involved.

He encourages those who are able to “just do it”. The SMP team provides volunteers with great support, Phil tells them.

“I do not want seniors to be taken advantage of” states Phil.

Because of this support and training, Phil felt well prepared for his first seminar. Phil first learned about the SMP program during a speech given by Erin Weir of AgeOptions. He now works with Jason Echols who replaced Erin when she took on new responsibilities. Both have been very helpful to Phil along with Monique James who coordinates the SMP program at South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities. “They all provide great backup and keep us in the loop regarding new developments” according to Phil. In addition to the seminars, Phil also assists seniors with Medicare appeals through his volunteer activity with SHIP (Senior Health Insurance Program) located in Palos Hills. Often the SMP presentation is done in conjunction with SHIP.

This Volunteer Spotlight in this edition of Volunteer Voice was contributed by Jim Sullivan, an Illinois SMP Program volunteer at AgeOptions. Jim has volunteered with the SMP program for three years.

First Ever Illinois SMP Volunteer Conference!

On April 24th, Illinois SMP volunteers from northern Illinois attended the first ever Illinois SMP Volunteer Conference. Together, volunteers heard what a day in the life of an OIG officer fighting health care fraud is like. They also had a chance to use their imaginations to take their SMP outreach to the next level. Additionally, SMP role specific trainings were offered to volunteers. AgeOptions and the Illinois SMP were glad to recognize the great work these volunteers do throughout the year.



Check Out the Illinois SMP Web Site We Have a NEW Look

You can find all SMP materials at www.IllinoisSMP.org. We have recently changed the way our web site looks, but all the same useful information is there. You can find tips sheets and Power Points on the following information: Medicare Fraud, Home Health Fraud, Durable Medical Equipment Fraud and Insurance Marketing Fraud. We have materials in 14 different languages. If someone is looking for ways to volunteer for the SMP Program, there is information pertaining to that. We hope you will get acquainted with our web pages and find a lot of useful information there.

The mission of the Illinois SMP is to empower Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to prevent, detect, and report error, fraud and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs through community outreach and education.



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