



# COUNCIL on AGING

YOUR SOURCE AND VOICE ON SENIOR ISSUES

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The mission of Council on Aging is to transform Charlotte-Mecklenburg into a *senior-friendly*\* community through education and advocacy.

## CURRENT EMERGING ISSUE STATUS REPORT

**DATE:** 03/19/08

### IDENTIFIED ISSUE: UTILITY BILL DISCOUNT PROGRAM

- For some older adults living on a fixed income, paying for living and medical expenses is a struggle.
- This struggle may cause some older adults to be forced to decide between paying a utility bill or buying needed prescription drugs.
- A ***utility bill discount program*** needs to be developed for older adults in Mecklenburg County.

### CURRENT SITUATION:

- Approximately 45% of older adults in Mecklenburg County live off \$20,000 a year or less and spend more than 30% of their income on housing;
- Of the older adult population, 86% report taking prescribed medications and 40% reported having made a decision not to purchase prescription drugs at least once;
- Another 16% reported having gone without other essentials such as rent, food or utilities in order to purchase needed medications;
- There is currently no discount program for utility bills for older adults in Mecklenburg County;
- Municipalities in other states offer various programs for reducing or supplementing the costs of utilities for older adults.

### COUNCIL ON AGING EDUCATION / ADVOCACY EFFORTS:

- Graduates of the Council on Aging Program for Senior Advocates, presented to the Stratford-Richardson YMCA older adult program, have identified the need for utility bill assistance for older adults;
- A petition was created, which collected over 1,000 signatures of community supporters for a utility bill assistance program in the county;

- In April and May 2007, Council on Aging staff and Program for Senior Advocates' Graduates presented before Charlotte City Council and Mecklenburg Board of County Commission regarding this need for the aging population;
- Staff is currently furthering the research, identifying next steps and communicating with city/county leaders and the Utilities Commission to advance this issue.

#### **RESOURCES / ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- To read the petition letter, click [here](#).
- To read the presentation to local elected officials, click [here](#).

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- Contact your local elected officials and voice your opinion on the need for a utility discount program for seniors in Charlotte-Mecklenburg! Check with [Mecklenburg County Board of Elections](#) to find out who your representatives are.
- Help spread awareness on this issue and other important issues! Have Council on Aging present to your business, organization or club on how you can be involved in furthering this advocacy effort. Click [here](#) for more information.

*\*A senior-friendly community allows aging adults to maintain independence, dignity and quality of life.*