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SAVE THE DATE!

FEBRUARY 20, 2006 Legislative Breakfast – "The Future State of Mecklenburg County" - Putting the Pieces Together

MAY 25, 2006 – The Council on Aging and CPCC's Lifetime Learning Institute Joint Conference – "Can Business Boom as Boomers Retire?"

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*Our Mission is...
"to address, advocate
and support the rights
and needs of adults on
issues that affect them."*

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Becoming A Caregiver

by: LuAnne Nelson, CSWM

Becoming a caregiver may be a conscious decision that you make or, more likely, may be thrust upon you as a result of circumstances. A situation may develop quickly such as with a stroke or fall resulting in immediate incapacity. Other times, deterioration is slow allowing more time to weigh the options. In either case, the caregiver will need the support of family and the community. You are not alone. Like the securing of an oxygen mask for yourself in the event of loss of airplane pressurization, before helping anyone else, you must take care of yourself in order

to take care of your loved one. It is important that you and other family members understand that care giving is a family matter. Everyone needs to contribute in the manner that they best can. Other family members willingness to be involved will range from denial and detachment to smothering control. This is an emotion-packed situation. Past relationships and current conditions come into play. The potential caregiver will possibly be called upon to make great personal and financial sacrifices for the care recipient.

Both the caregiver and the care recipient may be facing total loss of independence, privacy and freedom.

Allowing the person requiring care as much input as possible, decisions will need to be made. What level of services are needed? What help is available from community agencies? Who will pay for what? Will the caregiver need any training for the physical care and coping with the unpleasant feelings that may result from weeks, months, or even years of hard work? How will the caregiver know

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Dear Members and Friends:

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Council on Aging's Newsletter, it is full of great articles and we have also included some wonderful recipes.

Everyone at The Council on Aging wish all our members and friends Happy Holidays!

How to Talk to Your Physician By: Rebecca Radecke, Grad. Asst., Gerontology- UNCC



“Organize your questions into the top three you would like to ask.”

A common problem among adults and especially among older adults is that of communicating effectively with their family physician. Everyone knows the standard; you wait 30 minutes to see a doctor for the 5 minutes you get to actually spend in person with the doctor. Your doctor comes into the room and commences to fire questions at you, “why are you here today?”, “are you exercising?”, “are you taking your medications properly?”, and so on, and before you know it you are out the door, clutching yet another prescription that you must take. When suddenly you realize that you

never got to ask your doctor about concerns you had about your health, or get to really tell him/her how you have been feeling lately. So you go home without the answers to your questions yet again.

However, there is good news. There are techniques to getting what you need and want out of your doctor visits. First: a few days before you are to visit your doctor start thinking what you would like to ask your doctor and write these questions down. Second: organize your questions into the top three you would like to ask. Your physician does have a limited time to

spend with you and you need to be sensitive to his/her time that they can spend attending to your needs. Third: if the physician still does not seem to be listening, you might reach out and touch him/her on the sleeve to get their attention, and also look directly into their eyes when speaking to them. This should convey to your doctor the urgency of your questions and the information you are trying to glean from them. Try these steps the next time you are going to visit your physician and remember, this is your time with your doctor and you need to get them to listen to you.

Companion Animals By: Kellie Visker, Graduate Asst., Gerontology- UNCC

Is your pet having a positive influence on your morale and health? Pets can be found in over 50 million households across the United States, and are often incorporated into families and are treated as family members. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that pets can have positive effects on children, families and older adults. For many years, the field of gerontology has examined the effects that pets can have on older owners. Do pets actually have positive effects on their older adult owners? Let's look at some of the evidence.

Many researchers have focused on the fact that pets provide a sense of companionship. Older pet owners generally state that the

main reason behind why they have a pet is because of the company that they can provide, whether the older adult is living alone or with others. Dogs and cats are often looked at as conversational companions because they are willing, and are typically always available. Many older pet owners also report that they talk to their pet, which can be therapeutic because it provides a way to relieve stress, share exciting news, as well as to just talk without being interrupted or judged.

Pets can also provide their older owners with the opportunity to increase physical activity. Research has found pets can act as a stimulus for exercise, which can

help to improve cardiovascular health. Older adults who own pets have reported spending more time outdoors and taking more walks. Games, such as playing fetch, can promote play, as well as help maintain humor. Cats and dogs can encourage their owners to be less lethargic and more active in everyday life. We all know that maintaining an active lifestyle in our later years has been shown to be associated with a lower risk of falls and fractures, as well as associated with our overall general health. It seems that pets can aid in fulfilling the need to be active in later life.

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Ever Been In a Rush? By Maarten Pennink

This morning I met a friend in the street on his way to the doctor for a skin treatment. I was on my daily walk, and he stopped briefly to say hello. I noticed parts of his breakfast sandwich on the passenger car seat. Typically a man in a hurry.

In retirement, making up my own schedule, that predicament doesn't happen very often any more, and I wonder whether I miss that. Now the case is more often: "What shall I do next?" Every morning, I get up and walk my walk, eat my breakfast, have my half cup of coffee at the corner coffee shop, and then That's what retirement is for many people at my age and older. Oh yes, occasionally I take a nap in the afternoon.

This state of being gives me ample time to look around and observe how others spend their time, and it is surprising how much time those much younger "waste." They talk on their cell

phones, but when I listen in, many conversations don't amount to much. Many read a book, do their crossword puzzle, scan the paper. Suddenly they look at their watches and jump up and leave...in a hurry or pretending to be. And by the way, there are an awful lot of younger folks, middle and higher income people who find time to visit the coffee shop so they can be even more rushed. The world needs them to be, or am I imagining it all?

I have this feeling that it is fashionable in our society to be in a rush, to be on the phone and to be in a constant state of flux. Having that pressure gives "purpose," but at the end of the day the fruits of all that labor may not be very clear.

I think it's great to have some idle time and use it like we retirees are getting accustomed to. In the beginning of our "Later Years in Life," it takes some get-

ting used to, but intentionally spreading my activities over my waking hours makes perfect sense. I feel purposeful, and at the end of the day I am not exhausted from pretending. Yes, from time to time, I feel rushed, however, not very often any more.

So I think that we retirees have got it made, and the younger generation should learn from us. Sorry! But they are on their way, pushing forward with no time to learn.

Am I a little jealous? Sure. Too much extra time is not good either, and I am scheduling events for the future, communicating with others to see what the world has to offer, but rushing? I like my steady pace, and I want to keep it that way. You?

By the way, I have to go now, I have an appointment at 11 a.m. Rushed? Me?

Companion Animals (continued) page 2

Through providing and requiring affection, pets can be helpful in times of stress and bereavement. Older adults have stated that the bond they have with their pet is genuine and based on unconditional love. This unconditional love is suggested to provide a buffer against harmful effects of stress, which in turn might help to reduce health problems. Furthermore, the sense of touch is extremely important to people of all ages. Petting or touching a companion animal is suggested to be therapeutic in a way because it brings about feelings of life, intimacy and belonging—helping to alleviate stress.

There are times when pets can have negative effects on their owners. We all

know that death is sad, especially when it is the death of a loved one. Pet owners, of all ages, create special relationships with their furry companions, which can lead to anxiety, grief and mourning when a beloved pet dies. Pet owners can also experience insensitivity from friends and family when their pet dies because many feel that the death of a cat or dog is not worthy of grief acknowledgement. This insensitivity could inhibit an owner from grieving properly. Having to make the decision to euthanize a pet can also have negative effects on a pet owner, bringing about the struggle of the pet's quality of life versus the owners desire to keep the companion animal around. Furthermore, the death of a pet can be especially painful if an older owner lives alone, or if the pet is considered the older adult's only friend.

Companionship, exercise, and affection are only a few of the positive effects that pets can provide their older owners. There are many other positive effects that pets can provide. This is a field of study that is often overlooked by researchers; however, with more households owning pets and with the large generation of baby boomers growing older, it is important to acknowledge the effects that pets can have on their older owners. The next time you are walking your dog, take some extra time and walk a little longer for your own exercise. Trust me, your pet won't mind... Wondering if your pet has positive effects on your morale? Look into his/her eyes and see for yourself...

Recipes by Chris Cornett

Low Fat High Energy Cream Cheese Ball

(1) stick/bar of low fat cream cheese (1) pack of craisins (or what ever dried fruit you desire, but craisins are dried cranberries and are high in energy and good for your urinary system). pack of chopped walnuts (1) pack of whole wheat or whole grain crackers

Directions: Roll cream cheese into a ball and set aside. Mix the craisins and walnuts together in a bowl. Take the cream cheese ball and roll around in the bowl and gently press to get all the ingredients to stick to the ball. Open a pack of crackers, cut a piece of the ball off, place on the cracker and dig in!

High Energy Fruit Snack Mix

(1) bag of craisins, (1) large box of raisins, (1) large bag of walnuts, (1) large bag of pecans, (1) 16 oz. Jar of peanuts, (1)

pack of mixed dried fruit, (8 oz.) of M&M's (optional).

Directions: Mix all the ingredients together and put in a container and enjoy, this will make a lot of snack mix so make sure you put it in an air tight container.

Mixed Fruit Yogurt Parfait

(16 oz.) of no-fat vanilla yogurt, (1) bag of frozen mixed fruit

Directions: Put a little yogurt in the bottom of a cup, add the frozen mixed fruit, cover the cup and store in the fridge until the fruit thaws out (about an hour). TWIST! Put all the ingredients in a blender and blend on medium for about 20 seconds, add 1/4 cup of orange juice and blend on high for about 20 seconds and enjoy a nice cool fruit smoothie.

Fried Mashed Potato Cakes

Dried potato flakes, any no salt spice or spices, extra virgin olive oil, low fat sour

cream, low fat shredded cheese, and skim milk.

Directions: Follow the directions on the box for preparing the potatoes but use half of the water and milk that it calls for on the box. Substitute olive oil for the butter, mix all of the ingredients together in a bowl, make sure it is not too runny and not too dry. You should be able to pick up a large spoonful and it be like play-do. Take a spoonful and roll into a ball, take the ball and make into a patty (it should look like a raw biscuit but half as thick). Do the whole batch of potatoes into patties, heat a pan on medium heat and wait until you can put a drop of water in the middle of the pan and it disappears. Add the patties and cook until they are brown on the bottom, carefully flip the cakes over and finish cooking, remove the patties and top with the cheese, then spices, then sour cream.

Becoming a Caregiver (continued) page 1

when the time has come to stop being the primary caregiver?

Caregiving is demanding but it doesn't have to be unrewarding. There can be times of warmth and pleasure. Successful caregivers receive the role with the attitude that this isn't the end of their life, but rather a phase of opportunity. A new and different relationship can blossom. You may find a deeper love and commitment to your spouse or parent. Maintain a sense of humor. Journal your thoughts.

Please, please do not try to do this alone. Others, trained professionals, are available to look at the situation objectively. They have knowledge of entitlement programs, resources and

"tricks" that may make your life, and therefore the life of your loved one better. They look at the "big picture" and serve as an ongoing source of support for you.

With help, you can take on, or continue in your role as caregiver, with your head full of information, eyes open and heart full of love.

This article is the first in a series of articles designed to assist the caregiver of an aged parent, spouse or other relative (s). Subjects will include emotional, physical and financial tips, advice and topics for discussion. If you would like to comment on or have information and ideas to contribute, please call LuAnne Nelson at 704 504-3298.



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MAY 25, 2006 –
The Council on Aging
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Boomers Retire?”

JUST1CALL EXPANDS SERVICES

Just1Call, one of the nation’s premier Information, Referral, and Advocacy services, is expanding services. Currently, Just1Call provides a one-stop source of Information, Referral, and Advocacy services for seniors, adults with disabilities, their families, and caregivers, both near and far. Professionally trained social work staff provide friendly, courteous, and efficient service via telephone to assist citizens with obtaining much needed service through the various programs and services offered throughout the community.

Effective January 18th, 2006, with the addition of three social work staff, Just1Call will expand its availability and

service capacity to assist citizens. Citizens who contact Just1Call will continue to receive information, referral, and advocacy services, but will also be assessed for and receive linkage to all available programs and services offered throughout the Department of Social Services. This enhanced level of service delivery will provide a true, thorough, and efficient one-call effort to ensure that a complete range of services is available to all seniors, persons with disabilities, their families, and caregivers.

Call 704-432-1111
Toll Free 877-889-0323
Website [http://
www.just1call.org](http://www.just1call.org)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
<http://www.charmeckcoa.org>
IT’S GROWING!

Status of Seniors Report

Have you ever said or heard someone say “I can’t read the little (and hidden) street signs” or “Who do I call to find out how to help my Mom or Dad” or “How can I manage to have Mom or Dad live closer to me”? These and many other issues are addressed in the 2005 Status of Seniors Initiative Strategic Planning Report that lays out seven Recommendations and their associated Strategies. Check it out – [http://
www.statusofseniors.charmeck.org](http://www.statusofseniors.charmeck.org)

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM HELP

Medicare has developed a planning tool to help you decide which plan is right for you. If you are not comfortable with using a computer, find a family member or friend to help you navigate the site.

[http://www.plancompare.medicare.gov/
formularyfinder/selectstate.asp](http://www.plancompare.medicare.gov/formularyfinder/selectstate.asp)