

# CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COUNCIL ON AGING, INC. NEWSLETTER

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*Mission: To address, advocate and support the rights and needs of adults on issues that affect them.*

Welcome to the Fall 2005 edition of the Council on Aging Newsletter. The Council on Aging is pleased to announce that the agency has a new Executive Director, **Marie Shook**. Ms. Shook assumed her duties on September 12.

Ms. Shook served for 18 years as the Assistant Mecklenburg County Manager for Health and Human Services and recently retired from Mecklenburg County as the Executive Assistant to the County Manager.

Her county government career spans 37 years of service. She was the County Administrator in Peoria and Dekalb Counties in Illinois prior to coming to Mecklenburg. Ms. Shook has an MPA from the University of Illinois – Springfield (Sangamon State.)

**Ms. Shook** replaces **Tom Haselden** who served as Council on Aging's Interim Executive Director since 2003.

## FROM THE DESK OF MARIE SHOOK

Dear Members and Friends:

I appreciate the generous and warm welcome to the Council on Aging. I look forward to working with you on the opportunities before us. I pledge my energy and commitment to the Council's mission and to forging strong community partnerships.

Thank you for your support.

*Marie*

## MEET OUR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

We are very fortunate to have two UNC-C graduate students working with us this year. **Rebecca Radecke** and **Kellie Visker**. **Rebecca** and **Kellie** are both candidates for Masters Degrees in Gerontology. **Rebecca** working with COA's Program for Senior Advocates and **Kellie** is working on research projects.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Council on Aging** will host a **Candidates Forum on Thursday, October 20 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.** for Mayoral and City Council Candidates in the November 8 General Election.

The event will be held at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Center, 2225 Tyvola Road. Co-Sponsors are the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Center and Carriage Club of Charlotte. Admission is free of charge. For more information on the Candidates Forum please call 704-527-8807, Extension 4.

## **COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

COA has added several new board members to its roster. They are: **Kyra Craig Poff** who will serve as Board Treasurer; **Paul Babinski** of Liberty Healthcare Management; **Annie Flint** of Charlotte Region Hospice and Palliative Care; **LuAnne Nelson** of Silver Oak Care Management and **Sarah Privette** of Regency Retirement Village.

## **COUNCIL ON AGING'S NEWFOUND ENERGY**

The Council on Aging(COA) is experiencing very interesting and dynamic times. With newfound energy, the Development Committee under new leadership is approaching the future months and years with a sense of purpose. As a matter of fact, the first item on our agenda was creating a better formed Statement of Purpose, nicknames "The 30-Second Elevator Statement". Everyone in our organization should be able to clarify our reasons for being an integral part of this community and it should be clear to the listener in seconds.

Ever since the very beginning of August, this committee has met almost weekly analyzing past accomplishments, current needs and outlining future plans. This will be an ongoing process and can only be done successfully with dedicated time and energy from every member on this committee and with the support of every board member.

One of the key elements of a successful COA is adequate funding. In the past we have almost totally relied on monies allocated to us by specific organizations such as Mecklenburg County. Though those funds are crucial, they will probably not be sufficient for the tasks to be accomplished in the coming years. New funding strategies are in the works.

The aging population in this community will increasingly demand our attention. Current services will have to be enforced and expanded and new services will be demanded. The Boomers are standing at the gate and we need to be able to answer their questions and respond to their needs with an array of services giving them substance, not just words.

That is a monumental task and this committee is willing to spend time and energy to spearhead this effort and make COA the organization everyone has heard of and is aware of the active part it plays in this community.

## **TAI CHI**

Tai Chi, a 300 year-old Chinese exercise, has gained tremendous popularity over the years. The rise in its popularity is mostly due to its improvements on health, life expectancy, and physical functioning. Tai Chi, which is an excellent low to moderate intensity exercise, highlights aspects of meditation and movement through body and limb rotation and balance. Tai Chi movements are

practiced slowly and gently. This is a great workout suitable for people of all ages and health conditions because the movements can be performed sitting or standing.

Many research studies have been conducted to observe the effects that Tai Chi has on individuals of all ages, but many of the significant effects have been noticed on older adults. One study in particular found that Tai Chi helps to build lower-body strength and aids in increased control over bodily movements and balance. These improvements in physical functioning help to prevent older individuals from losing their balance and also decrease the likelihood of falling. Along with the decreased likelihood of falling, the likelihood of experiencing an injury as the result of a fall is reduced as well. Other health benefits of Tai Chi include an increase in walking stability, reduced stress, increased knee strength and improved cardiovascular functioning.

Tai Chi is a calming exercise that not only strengthens muscles, but also relaxes the mind and body. Through slow and tranquil body movements, emphasis is placed on internal energy, which also helps to increase self confidence. Examples of these tranquil body movements include: flexing and extending the knees and hips; slowly shifting one's weight; coordinated arm movements; body and torso rotation and postural alignment.

The Peaceful Dragon, one of the very few modern schools that teach classes on Tai Chi, is located in Charlotte and holds various morning and night classes. Information about Tai Chi classes can be found on the web at [www.thepeacefuldragon.com](http://www.thepeacefuldragon.com) or they can be reached by calling (704)504-8866. There are also Tai Chi videos that can be purchased to work out at home and can be found at local stores or on the internet.

Looking for a low to moderate intensity workout to strengthen your muscles? Try the calm and relaxing exercise of Tai Chi, an ancient form of Chinese martial arts.

### **HOW TO BEGIN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ABOUT RETIREMENT HOUSING**

To find out check the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services Website. <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/housing2.htm>

### **MECKLENBURG COUNTY SENIOR CITIZENS PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION**

If you...

- ▶ Are at least 65 years of age or totally or permanently disabled
- ▶ Have an income for last year Of not more than \$19,200.\*
- ▶ Are a North Carolina resident

\*Income eligibility is adjusted annually based on the cost of

living adjustment used in calculating Social Security and Supplemental Security income benefits.

You may be eligible to receive a property tax exemption of \$20,000 – or 50% of the appraised value of your home – whichever is greatest. An application for the exemption can be obtained from the office of Property Assessment and Land Records at 700 East Stonewall Street, Charlotte, NC 28202 or call the Tax Office at 704-336-6394. (Application deadline is June 1, 2006).

### **WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL CASE MANAGER?**

No one will dispute the following two statements. There are increasing numbers of people living longer in the United States and most older persons prefer to remain in their homes as they age. But staying in your own home may be impossible without additional help. Even with family assistance, other supportive service may be needed.

Persons with very low incomes may be able to turn to local governmental agencies for help. But if your income is too high to qualify, what can you do? Recently, a different option has become available. . . private geriatric care management. A professional geriatric care manager is a human service professional with a special body of knowledge and experience related to aging and elder care issues. For a fee, a geriatric care manager will assess a

client's needs, develop a care plan, arrange for and coordinate services, and may be available to monitor care on an ongoing basis.

If you are asking yourself the following questions, a geriatric care manager is the answer. Do I feel safe at home? (Or are my parents safe at home?) Are the problems you or your loved ones face becoming larger and more complex than you can comfortably manage? Are my parent's health concerns taking me away from my family or work? What kind of help would increase safety while maintaining quality of life and independence? Do I need help cutting through the red tape? Or just, where do I begin?

### **LESSONS LEARNED FROM TERRI SCHIAVO: THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVANCE CARE PLANNING**

*Terri Schiavo's name became familiar through countless media stories as her loved ones struggled with their differing opinions and wishes for her care. Conversations about end-of-life issues are often difficult, but educating ourselves about options and having these discussions can bring peace and comfort at a time when we might not be able to express our wishes.*

*Established in 1978, Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region has served individuals in nine Metrolina counties with hospice, palliative care and end-of-life education. We provide presentations including Advance Care Planning to civic groups, communities of faith, and clinical audiences. The following are some points you might want to consider when making your health care plan:*

**The goal** of advance care planning is for you to live well, in a way that is meaningful to you, for as long as you live.

**Education** is a key component of advance care planning. Gaining understanding of the dynamics of a health condition will give guidance about potential decisions that may be faced.

**Thinking** about health care choices in the context of individual values and beliefs also give guidance for making decisions. There are guides such as *Isn't It Time We Talk®* and many Internet websites ([www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)) which encourage thoughtful self-exploration about the quality and meaning of life. These are intensely personal decisions with no right or wrong choices. Consult your doctor, treatment team, clergy, family and friends. Appointing a Health Care Power of Attorney is especially important when a dementia related disease has been diagnosed.

**Conversations** with loved ones are a vital foundation for making decisions about health care. There could be a time when an individual is unable to make decisions and choices would be in the hands of family. When conversations have taken place, they provide the guidance that direct care decisions. Advance care planning is a gift, to yourself and your family.

**Recording** the plan is a necessary component of this process. The Health Care Power of Attorney legally appoints a representative to make health care decisions if (and only if) the individual is unable to communicate wishes. These documents are important

for everyone as a sudden crisis could occur any time. Forms are available on the Internet, or we can provide them.

**Continuing** the process is key to advance care planning. It is recommended that people with a diagnosis such as Alzheimer's Disease review advance care plans every six months. Decisions may change over time as health changes. Life events may also change perspective on health care decisions.

Advance Care planning is a process, **not an event**. Conversations are as important as completed legal documents.

*"The future depends on what we do in the present."*

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

**North Carolina Information and Forms:**

<http://www.nhpc.org/files/public/NorthCarolina/pdf>

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Mental illness in older adults is a growing concern in the United States and for those with a persistent mental health problem service needs will grow considerably. More than one-fourth of older adults (65 and older) have a mental health issue. Whether it is depression, bi-polar disorder, or a type of dementia, all of these disorders are significant and a growing problem in the older adult community. Everyone feels sad or gets the blues now and then. But if these feelings last more than two weeks you could have depression.

Depression is a common illness. Close to 19 million people each year develop a problem with depression according to the National Institute of Mental Health. It happens to one in four women and one in 10 men some time in their lives.

The good news is that depression can be treated. With proper treatment, most people start to feel better in a few weeks. Without treatment, depression is a serious illness.

#### **How Do You Know If You're Depressed?**

People who are depressed won't start feeling better after a short time. In fact, they might stay sad for months or even years if they don't get help. Without treatment, depression can get worse. It can affect your physical and emotional health causing problems at work, at home and in social relationships.

Other common signs of depression are:

- Feeling empty, tired or hopeless
- Losing interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling restless, anxious or irritable
- Oversleeping or not being able to sleep
- Not eating or eating too much
- Having unexplained aches and pains.
- Thinking about dying or killing yourself
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions

## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

- Psychiatrists
- General Practitioners for Seniors
- Psychologists
- Neuropsychologists
- Psychiatric Social Workers

## REPORT FROM EVELYN NEWMAN – BOARD MEMBER EMERITUS

Council on Aging has already completed three months of the 2005-06 fiscal year. I find it difficult to believe that we now have only 9 months to accomplish the plans for the year that we are in the process of fine-tuning.

As board members, I think we have greater self-awareness for enhanced effectiveness as we perform our duties. Our mission, “To address, advocate the support the rights and needs of older adults issues that affect them” is one that each board member can repeat without hesitation. As a board we have a clearer vision of our role and a better understanding of our mission.

COA can be proud of the accomplishments realized during the 2004-05 year. Relocating our offices to the Senior Center on Tyvola Road, has enabled us to partner with some of the Senior Center events. The Advocacy and Education committees staged several successful events during the year and have exciting plans for this year. The Development Committee is now responsible

for the recruitment of new board members and for fund raising.

Now that our new Executive Director, **Marie Shook**, is on board, COA looks forward to a very productive year. **Ms. Shook** brings outstanding experience and talents to the agency. The board eagerly looks forward to a very successful relationship.

## EVELYN NEWMAN RECEIVES AT&T TELECOM COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

**Evelyn Newman** received the prestigious AT&T Telecom Pioneers Community Impact Award in San Antonio, Texas this past January.

This award recognizes a Pioneer’s overall cumulative impact on his or her community throughout the year and over time. The award is based on the recipient’s benefit to the community; recognition as a community leader; responsiveness to community needs and partnerships, and the impact of the Telecom Pioneers in the community. Thomasboro Elementary School received \$1,000 in the name of **Ms. Newman**.

**Ms. Newman** retired from AT&T where she served as Area Manager for North and South Carolina. She has served as Chair of the Council on Aging and is now a member emeritus of the Board of Directors.

## COUNCIL ON AGING COMMITTEES

**The Council on Aging Education Committee**, chaired by **Bill Sparks**, is busily planning its annual May educational event. More details will be published in the Winter Newsletter. All indications are that this will be a very exciting event that will be of interest to the entire community.

**The Advocacy Committee**, chaired by **Millard McCluney**, is completing plans for the 2005 Candidates Forum scheduled for October 20, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Center. The event is co-sponsored by **the Senior Center and Carriage Club of Charlotte**.

The event is open to the public and there is no charge to attend Candidates for Charlotte Mayor and City Council have been invited to attend.

**The Development Committee** chaired by Jeff Palmer, is involved with board member recruitment and fundraising strategies.

Special thanks to our board members, **Maarten Pennink LuAnne Nelson** and **Annie Flint** and our graduate assistants, **Kellie Visker** and **Rebecca Radecke** who contributed articles to this edition of the newsletter.

**COUNCIL ON AGING  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Aaron McKeithan, Jr.

***Vice Chair***

Maarten J. Pennink

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Kyra Craig Poff

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Karen Knutson  
Cora Mills  
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***Board Members Emeritus***

Evelyn Newman  
Michael P. Sullivan

***Executive Director***

Marie Shook

***Office Manager***

Ruth W. Solomon

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