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# YOUR SOURCE & VOICE

“YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCE ON AGING”

SPRING 2007

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## DON'T MISS THE CONFERENCE

*“Emergency Planning for Older Adults: Why Planning for the Worst is Your Best Plan of Action.”*

May 24, 2007 8am—4pm  
Hilton Charlotte University

\$95/ person before May 17  
\$110/ person after May 17

Can't attend the entire conference? Reserve a Corporate Luncheon Table  
\$400/ table - seats 8  
For reservations: Kellie Visker, 704-527-8807.

Vendor Exhibit  
Your company/organization can be represented with a vendor table. Pricing ranges from \$350 - \$500.

To order tickets, reserve a corporate table or vendor exhibit, please call (704) 527-8807 ext. 4 or visit [www.charmeckcoa.org](http://www.charmeckcoa.org).

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## EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR OLDER ADULTS

By Kellie M. Visker, Council On Aging Advocacy/Education Manager

Did you know that Charlotte is the ONLY city in the world to have two nuclear plants located within close proximity to the downtown center? Did you know that more than 34,000 older adults in Mecklenburg County can be defined as frail and will be at risk should a disaster strike our area? Did you know that nearly 30% of the 65+ population in Mecklenburg County has a physical disability, which would make it difficult for them to evacuate in an emergency? Are you prepared?

On **May, 24, 2007**, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Council on Aging's 2007 Annual Conference will present: **“Emergency Planning for Older Adults: Why Planning for the Worst is Your Best Plan of Action.”** The conference will be held at the **Hilton Charlotte University Place from 8:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.**

This very important conference will examine the urgent need of emergency preparedness for older adults living in the Char-

lotte area, along with retirement and long-term care communities.

Research will be presented from recent graduates of the UNC-Charlotte Graduate School on emergency planning for long-term care facilities in Mecklenburg County. Thomas Blackwell, MD, Medical Director of the Department of Emergency Medicine and the Center for Prehospital Medicine at Carolinas Medical Center, will present the morning keynote address. Dr. Blackwell will discuss the deployment of the Carolinas MED-1 Mobile Hospital in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The luncheon address will be made by Constantinos Miskis, JD, the Regional Administrator of Region IV of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration on Aging (AOA).

Whether you are a senior, senior service provider, long-term care administrator or director, emergency response official, nurse, caregiver, home health

provider, special care provider, or work with seniors or special medical needs individuals – You don't want to miss this conference!

This conference will:

- Encourage long-term care communities to be proactive in planning for potential emergencies and reduce reliance on first responders
- Encourage cooperation among local government agencies, long-term care communities and first responders
- Enhance capacity of seniors and providers of senior services to plan for emergencies
- Provide information and tools to facilitate emergency planning

You can still register! Visit [www.charmeckcoa.org](http://www.charmeckcoa.org) or call (704) 527-8807 for more information on this much needed conference.

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

## The Director's viewPOINT

Welcome to a redesigned newsletter to complement a renewed Council on Aging. We're committed to being "your source and voice" on senior issues!

Key to our renewed efforts was the merger with the Status of Seniors Initiatives (SOSI), which we celebrated March 27. Many political supporters, agency partners, friends and SOSI volunteers gathered at the Levine Museum of the New South to share our excitement.

I believe empowering our seniors to use their collective voice is essential! The *Program for Senior Advocates* has already involved 110 seniors in 5 programs in only 4 months. Graduates tell me the sessions are substantive and useful. Presenters include partners from government, politics and allied agencies. We are grateful for their contributions. Special thanks to our UNCC graduate assistant/program coordinator, Katie Kutcher, for keeping the programs interesting and organized!

Highlighting our work towards a "senior-friendly" community is the 2007 Annual Conference, "*Emergency Planning for Older Adults: Why Planning for the Worst is Your Best Plan of Action.*" Because we care about the safety of our seniors, we sponsored research at UNCC to assess our community's emergency preparedness. Advocacy/Education Manager Kellie Visker conducted that research and will present the results. This conference is a **MUST** for all who need information and tools to prepare for an emergency. You can find additional details online at: [www.charmeckcoa.org](http://www.charmeckcoa.org).

Please, tell me what you think; ask questions, get involved and to ensure the Council on Aging is providing valuable services to you and this community, please support us. Without you, we're gone.

Until next time, *Debora*

## SENIOR ADVOCATES IN ACTION

By Katie Kutcher, UNC-Charlotte Graduate Assistant

During the Program for Senior Advocate classes, participants identify major concerns they all share. As a guest speaker for the Program for Senior Advocates, County Commissioner Dan Ramirez encouraged them to voice their concerns. That is precisely what they did.

At the Dowd-YMCA, the program participants took their concerns into account and decided to act. Their particular concern was the constant struggle they, and many other seniors, face to pay their utility bills. Through research, the participants discovered that in some other states and municipalities, (such as Seattle, Washington, and Georgia) seniors are eligible to receive discounts on their utility bills. Empowered with this information, the participants created a petition and collected over 1,000 signatures in only three weeks.

Commissioner Ramirez helped the seniors get on the agenda for the County Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. Two buses of graduates attended the meeting wearing their green and red YMCA gear to show their support for this advocacy effort. Kellie Visker, Council on Aging Advocacy/Education Manager, and Hattie Harris, Program for Senior Advocate Graduate addressed the County Commissioners, presenting the petition that proposes the creation of a Senior Utility Discount Program for older adults living in Mecklenburg County. Upon hearing the seniors' concerns the County Commissioners congratulated the participants for their efforts.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this effort, please contact Kellie Visker at [kvisker@charmeckcoa.org](mailto:kvisker@charmeckcoa.org) or 704-527-8807 ext. 4.



*Senior Advocates Program participants from the Dowd YMCA.*

**The Council on Aging** proudly sponsors *The Program for Senior Advocates*, a free educational program that empowers senior participants to advocate for themselves and on behalf of their community. During the seven-week course, guest speakers from the community address such important issues as assertiveness, advocacy, legal issues, county and city government and transportation. Recent grant money from the United Way Focus Area Grant has allowed the Program to expand and touch more seniors with this education. Congratulations to the graduates at The Ada Jenkins Center Senior Nutrition Program and The Dowd YMCA. Special thanks to all the community professionals who volunteered to facilitate the classes, including Dick Kates- former RSVP assistant, Trena Palmer-Charlotte-Mecklenburg Senior Centers, Becky Williams-Disability Rights & Referral, Sarah Mason- Legal Services for The Elderly, Jennifer Roberts- Board of County Commission Chair, Commissioner Dan Ramirez, Kim Taylor-CATS, LuAnne Nelson-Silver Oak Care Management. Dr. James Dudley-UNCC, Officer Carmen Mendoza-CMPD, Jeanne Miller- Davidson Chief of Police, Commissioner Karen Bentley, and City Council Member Michael Barnes.

## WHAT WILL BE YOUR LEGACY?

By Maarten Pennink, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Council on Aging, Board of Directors

I was searching the Internet with a small coffee within reach when a friend of mine tapped me on the shoulder and started a conversation. I asked him to take a seat, and after explaining what my week was like, he dropped the question in my lap: "What will be your legacy in life?"

I can try to express my thoughts the best way possible, and I did, but in the end, am I the one who will determine what MY legacy will be?

I revered my grandmother, but I don't think she was worried about her impressions she left with me. In my mind she was a colossal pillar, and I named my computer hard-drive after her. I hope that the people I come in contact with will remember me fondly. I don't want and aspire to monuments or statues.- not that anyone is planning to create one. If my son tells me that he loves me, my

grandson gives me a real hug, and my friends come to me for companionship, I'll be a happy man.

Thinking about that question, I can't help but realize that my legacy will be determined by those around me. I may want all I want, but if my "environment" sees it differently, all my wants make very little difference. I have the feeling that I will leave behind a mixed bag of positive and negative impressions - Dutch, tall, peculiar accent, opinionated. And how long that impression will last is very much in question. My son and grandson will remember me their whole life - good, bad or indifferent, because my interaction with them will have been intense, but my friends ... well, you will have to ask them.

By the way, some people equate legacy with money, and that may be so, but, most likely, that is not the one I will be remembered for.

Also, the term "legacy" will take on a different meaning after the person has "left." It doesn't really come into focus until life has been lived. Take President Ford. Lately, when he was still with us, he was in the news periodically, but as soon as he died, most of us started to review his accomplishments. It almost seemed that his legacy could only be assessed after his death. Until then, we held off final judgment. By the way, I think he was one of the great presidens over our country.

While the reader thinks this over, I am enjoying my family, my friends, the place I live in, the health I enjoy and all the new things that come my way every day. The legacy question is one to ponder, but not one to worry about with great regularity. Cheers!

## DEMENTIA...HOW TO PLAN DURING A NATIONAL DISASTER

By LuAnne Nelson, Silver Oak Care Management

Disasters strike quickly and sometimes without warning. Even the best emergency response workers cannot reach everyone right away. Loss of lives, property and the resulting chaos and confusion can be disabling for everyone. Think of how terrifying it must be for someone with dementia.

We each have a responsibility for preparing our communities and ourselves for natural and man-made disasters. We also have a responsibility for preparing for our loved ones.

Prepare an emergency kit. Using a watertight container, gather medications, medical documents and physician contact information. Include copies of power of attorney, health care power of attorney and other legal documents.

Make copies of insurance card and social security cards. Have a recent picture of the person with dementia and the Alzheimer's Safe Return phone number available. Make extra ID and clothing tags for identification. They should wear an identity bracelet at all times.

When an actual disaster is probable, get to your loved one as soon as possible. People with Alzheimer's disease may not realize they are in harm's way. Along with the emergency kit, bag up extra clothing, incontinence supplies and wipes, a favorite huggable for comfort, favorite food, liquid meals and backup eyeglasses and dentures.

After the disaster has passed, it may mean that you will be displaced. Being uprooted is difficult for any of us, but it

is especially disturbing and disorienting to someone with dementia. The stress and confusion may cause the person to react in ways that are puzzling or alarming to others. You can help them by creating a positive atmosphere and making sure that those around understand the person's limitations and are able to communicate effectively with them. Keep their environment as safe as possible by removing potentially dangerous objects and maintaining routines as much as possible. Care for you loved one by maintaining hydration and nutrition and getting fresh air and exercise. And finally, care for yourself. Seek help, find a good listener, and take time to reflect.

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**DEMENTIA...HOW TO PLAN DURING A NATIONAL DISASTER**

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If you are not geographically close to your loved one and know you would not be able to reach them “in time,” your plan should reflect this fact. If they are living in a memory care (assisted living) facility, the facility should have a plan in place. All corporate offices send down such a plan to every facility. Every administrator can point to the plan as it sits on the shelf. Review the plan and make

sure is consists of more than a call to 911. During a national emergency, 911 and emergency personnel will be more than busy. Ask specific questions about evacuation and if they have a generator.

It is true; all of this preparation will take some time. But look what is at stake, your loved one’s care and well being. Invest the time today. It’s the smart thing to do.

*Financial freedom is empowering. In April, Council on Aging offered financial seminars to avoid identity theft, create a budget and ensure retirement savings. This information, so critical to seniors, is available to clubs, churches or social groups. Call us to arrange YOUR presentation!*

*Concerned about important decisions for yourself or loved ones? Council on Aging is planning a seminar about the role and value of a Care Manager in late June. Keep checking our website, [www.charmeckcoa.org](http://www.charmeckcoa.org), for details!*

**Make a Donation Today...For a Senior Friendly Tomorrow**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Council on Aging, a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit, is dedicated to ensuring a “senior-friendly” environment for all older adults in our community. We’re going to accomplish this by gathering information on important aging issues, sharing that information throughout the community, and engaging the entire community in seeking solutions that are helpful to seniors.

Support from people like you throughout the community will help Council on Aging to be YOUR source and voice on all senior issues! Please fill out and send in this page with your donation. Share information about Council on Aging with your friends and neighbors. Be a partner and find partners to help Council on Aging make your community a “senior- friendly community.” Thank you!

NAME		EMAIL	PHONE	
ADDRESS		CITY	STATE	ZIP

Yes, I’d like to receive emails with information that would be helpful to me.

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Donation Enclosed. (Please send to Council on Aging, 2225 Tyvola Road, Charlotte, NC 28210, Attn: Debora Sparks)

*(Donations are tax deductible)*

**CHARLOTTE- MECKLENBURG  
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