



# Director's Dose: Pot of Gold

~Jennie Deese

On February 24, The GeorgiaCares program partnered with the Atlanta Ombudsman Program to conduct a comprehensive training on the new Medicare Prescription Drug benefit for all nursing home and personal care home providers in the metropolitan area. This training was held at the Gwinnett County Justice Administration Building in Lawrenceville. Dr. Ben Abraham, P.C. provided an overview of the Part D benefit and Anne Damon, Pharm D, United Pharmacy Services provided an in-depth explanation of the drug benefit in the long-term care setting. Linda Bravo of the Social Security Administration discussed the Low Income Subsidy application. The combined efforts of our partners continue to make a difference in the lives of Georgia's Medicare beneficiaries. Since November, over 350,000 individuals have enrolled in a part D plan that is allowing them to save on their prescription medications. However, many more need to enroll. Let's continue to mobilize our efforts in blanketing the state with information on the new Medicare benefit. You will deliver your pot of gold.

Having a heart filled with gold is useless when you have no one to share.

Find a heart and deliver your pot of gold. **Stacey Chillemi**



Left to Right: Vicki Mikels, Anne Damon, Cheryl Harris, Jennie Deese, Flo Boehm, Linda Bravo

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### Special points of interest:

Open enrollment into a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan ends May 15, 2006. The next open enrollment will be November 15—December 31, 2006 with a minimum penalty of 7% of the national average cost added to the premium of the chosen plan.

## “Have Handouts, Will Travel”: Finding New Lifelong Planning Audiences

Give yourself a hand if you’ve already presented the GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning message to listeners at every key workplace, professional association, and faith community in your area. Ready to expand your scope? Uncover new audiences through the sources below, and remember to book one-on-one counseling appointments after every event for maximum impact.

### Caregiver Support Groups

National experts note that family caregivers, their relatives, and friends are the groups most likely to plan for their own long-term care futures. Contact this prime audience by collaborating with organizations such as the Alzheimer’s Association, the National Parkinson Foundation, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers in your area.

### Alumni Clubs and Social Groups

Select social organizations or alumni class groupings that reflect your targeted age range and offer to lead a lively dinner discussion about lifelong planning topics. (Put your message in publications, too.) Be sensitive to how individuals may perceive themselves age-wise, and approach members not only as future consumers but also as current or potential caregivers.

### Libraries & Independent Bookstores

Talk with general managers about creating lifelong planning displays to highlight thematically related new releases. But don’t stop there. Request presentation slots and arrange for high-impact announcements in promotional materials, as well.

### Hospitals

Tap into your local hospitals’ community education departments and offer to speak on lifelong planning topics of interest to healthcare consumers. Be extra smart and make your case with the hospital’s discharge planning and finance managers to ensure that key staff will support your presentation proposal. No luck in getting speaking slots? Turn to Plan B and ask for permission to place information displays in high-traffic areas.

You put the spark in the GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning Program with your ingenuity, assertiveness, and statewide team spirit. Take these ideas on the road, share success stories, and recommend your own ideas for reaching future long-term care consumers throughout Georgia.

~Cynthia Haley, LLP Coordinator



# AAA Focus—Southern Crescent

The Southern Crescent region has been running full blast for the last 10 months since the inception of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. We partnered with the Sonia Ridley at the Social Security office in Carrollton and Jim Bingham, Tim McGill at the LaGrange office and Dexter Denny at the Griffin office to provide community education throughout our ten county region. We also partnered with Charles Winn, a pharmacist in Griffin, to help with the community education presentations in our region. We have conducted 76 community education presentations which included information on Part D and Medicare fraud, waste and abuse. We participated in 7 health fairs, and provided 20 sign ups for Part D.

Southern Crescent GeorgiaCares program is so visible throughout our region that we are receiving referrals from all of our DFCS offices, Social Security, pharmacies in all of our counties, local hospitals, senior centers, doctor offices and churches. As of February we have compared plans for approximately 2,000 Medicare beneficiaries and enrolled at least 7% of those beneficiaries. The call volume is still very steady and some days extremely high. Our volunteers come in everyday and all of them work 8 hour shifts sometimes 2 and 3 days a week. If it wasn't for our dedicated volunteers we would not have accomplished a quarter of what we have done in the past few months.

We were getting lots of calls from beneficiaries already enrolled but could not get their medicines because they had not received the letter from their plan or their card. Our volunteer Carolyn Bell had an idea to run a public service announcement in all the local news papers of what information was needed at the pharmacy in order for them to get their medications. Big thanks to her for a successful idea. We have received feedback that it was very helpful.

*"If it wasn't for our dedicated volunteers we would not have accomplished a quarter of what we have done in the past few months."*

Southern Crescent has really taken off with our Lifelong Planning program thanks to Belinda Jones. The Medicare Prescription Drug benefit had taken up a lot of her time but when she got rolling she took off like a bullet. Our LLP program has completed 32 community education presentations on Long Term Care, 4 information tables, conducted 84 counseling sessions and multiple media events since September of 2005. Belinda has assisted the state office in securing partnerships with Bank of America and Regency Financial Services. Belinda has partnered with Jack Wilkes of Seniors Home Reverse Mortgage Company and Barry T. Fisher with AFLAC who have accompanied her to several of the community education presentations. Belinda has really taken this program and run with it. Southern Crescent is very proud of her and her efforts to make this program one of the best in the state.

We want to thank all of our local communities who believe in what we do in our GeorgiaCares program. The feedback we have received from the beneficiaries has been phenomenal.

**~Mona Browning**

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## **Southern Crescent Volunteer Highlight**

GeorgiaCares would like to highlight Shirley Lucas and Carolyn Bell. We could not highlight one without the other because they both have dedicated the last six months of their lives to our GeorgiaCares program. Shirley and Carolyn really have become Medicare Part D experts. In the last six months they have often volunteered 30 and 40 hours a week. Carolyn is a retired teacher who has become extremely knowledgeable with our State Health Retirees' situations. Carolyn and Shirley have done everything asked of them during this Medicare Prescription Drug process, including traveling to presentations and assisting with our sign ups conducted in all of our counties. Their tireless efforts do not go unappreciated. We don't know what we would do without them and would not want to try.

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## **Healthy Recipe of the Month—Shrimp Pasta Salad**

### **Ingredients**

- 2 C (8 oz.) medium shell pasta
- 1 C (8oz.) plain nonfat yogurt
- 2 Tbsp spicy brown mustard
- 2 Tbsp salt-free herb seasoning
- 1 C celery, chopped
- 1 C green onion, sliced
- 1 lb small shrimp, cooked
- 3 C tomatoes (about 3 large), coarsely chopped

### **Preparation**

1. Cook pasta according to directions; but, do not add salt. Drain and cool.
2. In a large bowl, stir together yogurt, mustard and herb seasoning.
3. Add pasta, celery and green onion and mix well. Chill for at least 2 hours.
4. Just before serving, carefully stir in shrimp and tomatoes.

***Yields:*** 12 servings

### **Nutritional Information per Serving**

Calories: 140

Fat: 1g

Saturated Fat: less than 1 g

Cholesterol: 60mg

Sodium 135 mg

Total Fiber: 1.3 g

Protein: 14g

Carbohydrates: 19g

Potassium: 295 mg





## State Benefit Plan Enrollees Have Questions

At a Medicare Part D event held at Savannah Technical College Monday, February 13, Congressman Jack Kingston and Senator Saxby Chambliss dropped by to greet the attendees, share their remarks, and offer their assistance. AAA and **GeorgiaCares** staff and volunteers were able to offer counseling and enrollment assistance for 64 beneficiaries by the end of that day. State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) retirees have had many questions as to whether SHBP will continue to provide pharmacy benefits after Part D became effective January 1, 2006. According to the GA Department of Community Health (DCH), SHBP retirees will continue to receive their pharmacy benefits as usual. The Part D plan they select will

coordinate with Medicare. Retirees eligible, but not enrolled in Medicare and retirees 65 years of age and older not entitled to Medicare will continue to receive primary benefits then SHBP, but will pay a higher premium. In order to have their premiums reduced, retirees were asked to provide a copy of their Part D card. The initial deadline for these retirees to select a plan was December 31, 2005. Recently, DCH and SHBP allowed a 2nd extension period to March 1 for members to submit necessary documentation on Medicare D enrollment to be eligible for a reduced monthly premium of \$32.20 per person or \$64.40 per family. SHBP members eligible for Medicare who do not enroll in Medicare Part D will pay

additional premiums of \$64.40 per person or \$128.80 per family for coverage beginning April 2006.

~ **Monica Couch**



Monica Couch counseling a senior

Pictured below: Part D counseling session



Congressman Jack Kingston at a Part D event



### Part D Savings Can Be Significant

A couple in Savannah was paying approximately \$12,000 per year for drugs needed to treat the husband's cancer. After Brandie McMahan, a **GeorgiaCares** Coordinator, completed a plan comparison, she found a plan that will save the couple almost \$9,800 a year.



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## Veterans Administration Issues Fraud Warning

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The Veterans Administration (VA) Public Affairs office has issued a warning to veterans around the country. A fraudulent company has been calling veterans claiming that they are now dispensing VA prescriptions. The company's representatives tell veterans that they must provide a credit card number and/or bank routing number to continue to receive their medications. This information is incorrect. The VA has not changed its processes for dispensing and receiving medications. Encourage seniors not to give out any personal information over the telephone. If veterans have questions, call the VA at 1-800-827-1000.

~Erika D. Lawson



*Health Care Fraud*