

# Silverwire

Vol. 3, No. 1 Fall/Winter 2004/2005

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

## New Projects Focus on Elder Transportation; Relatives Parenting Children Exposed to HIV

Three new projects have recently expanded the University of Maine Center on Aging's (UMCoA) research and evaluation activities. Each was made possible through effective academic-community partnerships.

The Eastern Maine Transportation Collaborative (EMTC), recently received a \$35,969 award to study the transportation needs of chronically ill patients 65 years and older in Penobscot, Washington, and Hancock counties. The award was made in the form of a planning grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation.

"When an older person has a chronic disease such as cancer or diabetes, they need frequent visits to a health care provider," notes Jamie Comstock of United Way of Eastern Maine, an EMTC representative. "Unfortunately, just getting there is often a great challenge for our older population, which in turn means they aren't getting the disease management they need."



Members of the Eastern Maine Transportation Collaborative

The Center on Aging will assess the needs of patients, health care services, and transportation providers within the three counties. The Collaborative will use the information collected to: generate specific recommendations for policy and program change, suggest procedures schedulers can use to assist clients needing transportation, and develop a regional database of resources.

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On another front, UMCoA, in partnership with Families and Children Together (FACT), has worked during the past two years to establish a unique framework for statewide collaboration among child welfare, aging, and other human service organizations, agencies and professionals to address the mental health and support issues of older adults who have assumed kinship roles.

"Parenting relatives are the forgotten caregivers. They are often invisible within our service system," explains Lenard Kaye, Center on Aging Director. "Parenting relatives are struggling with simultaneous challenges—the responsibilities of raising young children at the same time they are dealing with the realities of aging." These initial efforts were supported by a grant from Generations United.

In recent weeks UMCoA received a second grant of \$10,000 from Generations United to continue and expand its efforts with FACT. The next generation

Relatives as Parents Project (RAPP) will be multi-faceted including: education programming, policy analysis, support group expansion, and task force and network facilitation.



Barbara Kates, FACT Director

In a third new undertaking, FACT has contracted with UMCoA to provide program evaluation services to their recently funded Family Connections to Resources Project. Funding was received through the U.S. Department of Health and Human

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## Silverwire

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Lenard W. Kaye, Director

Leah Ruffin, Editor

Silverwire is published three times a year, in the Fall/Winter, Spring, and Summer.

The Center on Aging is an interdisciplinary research center associated with the University of Maine's School of Social Work and the College of Business, Public Policy, and Health. Our mission is to promote and facilitate activities on aging in the areas of education, research and evaluation, and community service, in order to maximize the quality of life of older citizens and their families in Maine and beyond.

### Center on Aging

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

5723 Donald P. Corbett Business Building  
Orono, Maine 04469-5723

Tel: (207) 581-3444

Fax: (207) 581-4490

E-mail: [info@mainecenteronaging.org](mailto:info@mainecenteronaging.org)

[www.mainecenteronaging.org](http://www.mainecenteronaging.org)

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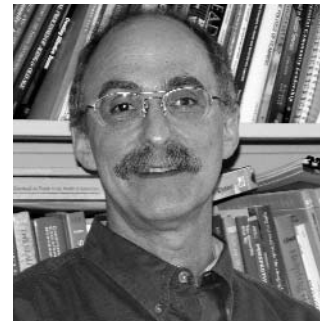
Nancy M. Webster, Training Specialist

# From the Director

The use of technology has become an exceedingly important facet of our work at the Center on Aging. We are not unique in our adoption of a variety of technological enhancements in our work. However, in a state such as Maine - the third most rural in the nation - it is particularly important that we exploit the potential of computers and related technologies. There is no doubt that it allows us to do more with less - to maximize our use of scarce resources and to more easily reach colleagues and clients both near and far.

Strategizing around new Center programming no longer entails whether technology is desirable but rather what application will best serve our purposes. Current examples include:

- ◆ Geographic information technology for mapping older adult health transportation service networks in a tri-county region of central and downeast Maine
- ◆ An internet-based information collection site for Maine's state-wide network of RSVP program sites
- ◆ International remote video-conferencing with a study group of researchers studying the prescribing patterns of drugs in older adults
- ◆ An interactive information and referral website for promoting the financial and consumer literacy of Maine's low-income older adults
- ◆ Courses for older adults in our senior college on using computers, understanding software, and surfing the net
- ◆ A brief screen for elder abuse built into the electronic case management system of a network of rural Maine hospitals
- ◆ An internet accessible course and training package for gerontological social workers and other human service professionals



Lenard W. Kaye



The screenshot shows the homepage of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior \$ense Program website. The header includes the AmeriCorps logo and the program name. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Directory, Mission, Staff Bios, Glossary, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area features a 'Senior \$ense Contact Us' section with a photo of two people and text describing the program's focus on developing preventive measures and services for low-income older adults. There are also sections for 'Resources of Interest' with links to 'New Information at VISTA's HQ', 'Subscribe to Our Newsletter', and 'Subscribe to Our Newsletters'. A sidebar on the right includes a 'Senior \$ense' logo and a 'Developed in Association with' logo for the Center on Aging.

New AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior \$ense website!

Visit: [www.seniorsenseforme.org](http://www.seniorsenseforme.org)

Are there costs and challenges associated with the adoption of technology in our work at the Center? Of course there are. Will that deter us? No. Technological innovation, thoughtfully and ethically applied, will allow us to do so much more than would otherwise have been possible. And, that will enable us to realize our mission - maximizing the quality of life of older adults and their families in Maine and beyond - that much sooner.

# Partnerships and Programs.....

## PRESCRIPTION UTILIZATION CONFERENCE AND DRUG RETURN



Conference Presenters (from left): Jim Cameron, Office of ME Attn.Gen.; Irene Wegner, Indiana AARP; and Anne Pistell, ME DEP

The Center on Aging, as a member of the Maine Benzodiazepine Study Group, helped to sponsor and plan October's 2nd Annual Benzodiazepine Conference, held in Bangor, Maine. Len Kaye, director of the Center on Aging, was featured as an opening speaker and panel member during this conference. The conference provided an opportunity to engage professionals from various disciplines and regions of the United States and Canada in a conversation about

the issues surrounding both general population and older adult use of benzodiazepines and other prescription drugs. Benzodiazepines are widely prescribed for individuals over the age of 65, with estimates of use at 25%. They are most commonly prescribed for anxiety and insomnia and represent the most frequently misused and abused medications by elders.

On a related note, the Center has extended these efforts through involvement in the Penobscot Area TRIAD's prescription drug drop off program, held in conjunction with October's Penquis Cap Foster Grandparent's recognition celebration.

The purpose of the drop-off was to increase safety in the homes of older adults by providing a safe way to throw away expired/unused medications. Older medications may become ineffective or harmful, pose interaction or overdose risks, threaten children through accidental ingestion, or, particularly in the case of narcotics, put older adults at greater risk of crime victimization. Penobscot county law enforcement officers Sheriff Glenn Ross and Deputy Chief Peter Arno were on hand to monitor the drop-off.

## PENOBSCOT VALLEY SENIOR COLLEGE FALL SEMESTER



The Penobscot Valley Senior College has completed another successful semester of "learning for the fun of it." With more than 200 members, the PVSC, has grown to be the second largest, volunteer driven, life-long learning program in Maine.

Information about joining the PVSC can be obtained by calling the college message phone at 581-1947 or by visiting [www.mainecenteronaging.org](http://www.mainecenteronaging.org).



The CoA's RSVP Born to Read program, in partnership with the Maine Humanities Council, held a training for volunteer readers in Bangor on October 7. Early childhood literacy activities and new books were discussed.

## BANGOR GROUP COMBATS ELDER ABUSE

The newly formed Bangor Coalition group held an innovative workshop combating the problem of elder abuse on November 9, 2004 at Eastern Maine Medical Center, Bangor. The workshop brought together community members who interact with older adults on a daily basis. Representatives from consumer services, including banks, retail stores, and utility companies were on hand, as well as members of local law enforcement, health, and human service agencies.

The workshop consisted of a morning informational session about domestic violence and abuse in later life, presented by Spruce Run, Rosscare Center for Healthy Aging, Maine's Adult Protective Services, and the University of Maine Center on Aging. The afternoon session, facilitated by Jeff Wahlstrom of the United Way of Eastern Maine, developed group goals to address community needs.

The event was sponsored by the University of New England Geriatric Education Center, The Elder Justice Project, and founding Coalition members.

## MAINE PARTNERS FOR ELDER PROTECTION PROJECT LUNCH & LEARN

The Maine Partners for Elder Protection (MePEP) project held the first of 10 Lunch & Learn continuing education sessions on October 27, 2004. Titled "Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation: The Sentinel Role of the Health Care Provider", the series began at Dover-Foxcroft Family Practice, one of the participating project health care sites.

Funded by a grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation, the MePEP project partners with health care offices to screen older patients for risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and provide early intervention services to those at risk. Subsequent



*Rick Mooers, LSW, ME DHHS Adult Protective Services Program Administer, presents MePEP Lunch & Learn*

sessions will be offered to each health care site throughout the project.

The project will offer a session to the public during the CoA's spring 2005 Professional Excellence in Geriatrics Education Series (PEGS). Project staff are also planning to host four more sessions open to the medical community and public at local

hospitals in Bangor, Dover-Foxcroft, Ellsworth, and Millinocket during the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006.

Visit [www.mainecenteronaging.org](http://www.mainecenteronaging.org) to learn more about the Maine Partners for Elder Protection project.



*Staff of Dover-Foxcroft Family Practice, one of MePEP's five participating health care offices*

## UMCoA KICKS OFF CONVERSATION SERIES

This fall, the UMaine Center on Aging is co-sponsoring a conversation series about memory loss and dementia, in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Association of Maine and the University of Maine Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These conversation series events provide a chance for family, friends, and caregivers of those with Alzheimer's

or related dementias to learn about and discuss topics related to dementia and caregiving.

Topics have included "Normal Aging Versus Dementia", "Maintaining Independence Using Assistive Technology", and "Community Resources for the Caregiver." Many of the caregivers and family members in attendance report that they have enjoyed the opportunity to share and learn from each other in these sessions.

The final event of the series will be "The Best Friend's Approach to Alzheimer's Care", presented by

Lucie Arbuthnot of the Alzheimer's Association of Maine on December 6th.

Conversation series events are free of charge and open to the public, University students, faculty, and staff. Events are held from 12:00-1:30 pm in the Seniors Skulls room in the Memorial Union at the University of Maine. For more information contact the Center on Aging at 581-3444.



*Left: Lynn Gitlow, Ph.D., OTR/L, ATP, Director of Occupational Therapy, Husson College presents "Maintaining Independence Using Assistive Technology"*



## POLICY CONFERENCE ON AGING PLANNED

**Register  
Now!**

### At the Crossroads *Aging Policy in Maine*

*A Prelude to the 2005  
White House Conference  
on Aging*

Date: February 2-3, 2005  
Location: Sheraton Hotel, South Portland, Maine  
Contact: Kara Ohlund; (207) 622-7566 x231; kohlund@mcd.org

**Educating and mobilizing  
on current and future policy  
issues facing Maine's aging  
citizens.**

Sponsored by:  
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*A Resource and  
Networking Conference for...  
Administrators, Clinicians,  
Legislators, Nurses, Opinion  
Leaders, Physicians, Policy Makers,  
Social Workers, and Stakeholders.*

**Call or E-mail Now for Registration Information!**

## PROJECTS (continued from cover...)

Services' Administration for Children and Families. This four year, \$400,000 project will allow FACT to expand programming to families caring for children exposed to HIV and/or substance abuse.

The project will provide eligible families legal services through the Volunteer Lawyers Project, assistance with respite services, and specialized training based on family needs. FACT will also provide continuing professional education on the challenges facing parenting relatives through the project.

For more information about this project, please contact FACT at 1-866-298-0896. For more information about the project evaluation, please contact the CoA.



*Theresa Boettner, AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior \$ense VISTA Leader*

No stranger to VISTA, Theresa previously served as a volunteer in 1968-69 in southern West Virginia where she helped to establish a rural mental health center and worked with local coal miners on health related matters.

After receiving an Associates Degree from SUNY at Alfred, Theresa chose to do her life's work in rural America. A 31-year resident of Maine, she has been providing assistance to families on issues relating to child abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, quality care at the end-of-life, and bereavement.

## AMERICORPS\*VISTA SENIOR \$ENSE MEMBER : KAREN MURPHY

*by Barbara Urquhart, SCSEP Trainee*

Karen Murphy is an AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior \$ense volunteer at the Waldo Community Action Partners agency (WCAP). Karen works directly with WCAP's newest program "Resource Connections", which matches seniors and families with needed low income housing. Most recently, Karen compiled a directory of low-income housing available in Waldo County.

"The greatest reward has been working together to see the end result in this part of our efforts," said Karen. "Seniors, families, and other individuals that either had been on the streets, burned out of their homes, or in need of lower income housing have been placed in homes."



Karen enjoyed swimming, boating, and walking this summer and is now looking forward to the skiing season. Karen feels that her year with WCAP is a great learning and growing experience and is grateful for the opportunity to be a VISTA Volunteer.

*Karen Murphy, AmeriCorps\*VISTA Senior \$ense*

## RELIGIOUS ATTENDANCE AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG OLDER AMERICANS: EVIDENCE FROM THE GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

By Steven E. Barkan, Ph.D. & Susan F. Greenwood, Ph.D.

While many previous studies have found that religious attendance is positively associated with psychological well-being among older adults, they either did not control for physical health, did not use national data, or included physical health in measures of psychological well-being. Because we wanted to understand more clearly the relationship between religious attendance and well-being, we used national data from the General Social Survey for adults 65 and older and an appropriate range of variables.

We chose as our primary independent variable, religious attendance, an item that asks respondents how often they attend religious services. For our dependent variables we used two measures of subjective well-being, life satisfaction and happiness. In assessing life satisfaction we included four items regarding family life, friendships, non-working activities, and place of residence. The measure of happiness was a single item: "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days--would you say you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"

Our findings show that religious attendance is positively associated with both measures of subjective well-being: Older adults who attend religious services more often report greater life satisfaction and happiness. We conclude that religious attendance has a moderate, nonspurious, salutary effect on both life satisfaction and on happiness among the elderly. Certainly more investigation is needed to confirm our findings, but our study underscores the need for social service agencies, health care professionals and facilities, and congregations to enable religious attendance and other organizational religious involvement by older adults.

*Steven E. Barkan is Professor of Sociology at the University of Maine. Susan F. Greenwood is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Maine. More information about this research can be found in: Steven E. Barkan and Susan F. Greenwood, University of Maine. Review of Religious Research 45: 116-129, 2003*



*Bone Builders class takes time out from an exercise session*

*A recent \$5,844 grant award to the University of Maine Center on Aging RSVP from the Maine Community Foundation made possible the recent launch of three new "Bone Builder" projects, the community-based osteoporosis prevention education and exercise program for older citizens. Call 581-4412 or 581-4421 for more information.*

## OLDER WORKERS' SAFETY CONCERNS DOCUMENTED

Do the workplace safety needs of Maine workers change as workers age? The Center on Aging and the Maine Department of Labor have received funding to examine this and other safety concerns facing many Maine businesses and workers. The Department of Labor expects a 63% increase in Maine workers between the ages of 55 and 64 by the year 2010, an estimated increase of 48,000 older workers.

The project is considering the needs of five industries known to have higher rates of injuries among older workers than other types of jobs: healthcare, shipbuilding and repair, public schools, grocery stores, and state government.

"The focus of this current research is on workplace health and safety," project investigator Sandra Butlers said, "so the state can make provisions to assure a safer workplace as the labor force changes."

Funding for the project was received from the Harvard-National Institute for Safety and Occupational Health (NIOSH) Education and Research Center at the Harvard School of Public Health. Study results will be used to inform state government policy decision makers as well as advocacy organizations, employers, and economic developers.

# Previews and Preludes.....

## SUCCESSFUL AGING DISCUSSED

The Center on Aging will again collaborate with Mary Jane Bush, the Town of Bucksport's Health Planning Director, to present a second year of Successful Aging workshops, during the fall and winter of 2004-2005. The Successful Aging workshops will help facilitate discussion about aging issues among Bucksport's older citizens and their families, health care providers, and service professionals involved in their lives and will provide contact information for identified service needs.

These workshops will also provide an opportunity for the older residents of Bucksport to obtain free expert advice, individualized for their own specific needs to plan for growing old in the town that they love. Some of the topic areas to be covered in the workshops are: Legal Matters, Active Aging, Health and Safety, Food and Nutrition, Financial Concerns, and Talking with Family Members about Growing Old.

## PARENTING RELATIVES FOCUS OF STATE POLICY WORKSHOP

In January of 2005 the Relatives as Parent Project (RAPP) will be hosting a joint white paper presentation and planning workshop. The presentation will detail the recommendations growing out of the project's research on issues facing relative parents. The workshop will facilitate a process for participants to incorporate project recommendations in state policy and service provision. Key legislators, judges, relative parents, and community stakeholders will be invited.

Discussion will also focus on legislation sponsored by Senators Snowe (R-Maine) and Clinton (D-New York). If passed, the bill will enable federal dollars currently used for foster care to subsidize guardianship for parenting relatives, providing necessary permanency for children within their natural families. For more information, contact the CoA at 581-3444.

## RSVP VOLUNTEERS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

The UMaine Center on Aging's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program is collaborating with the Eastern Agency on Aging and the American Red Cross to produce "PrepareMe", a new Homeland Security/Disaster Preparedness project.

Volunteers are currently being recruited and trained to be part of community disaster preparedness educator teams occurring throughout Washington, Hancock, Piscataquis, and Penobscot counties.

Volunteers will be offered a variety of training through the Red Cross and RSVP, then will meet with local community organizations and senior groups to offer mini-workshops, intended to inform about types of disasters and emergency situations, as well as ways in which to prepare and plan for such emergencies.

Interested volunteers or community groups wishing a workshop should call Chevelle Marshall at 581-4421.

## Make a Donation to Honor a Special Elder in Your Life

I/we want to make a gift in support of the UMaine Center on Aging and its programs in service to Maine's older adults, their families, and their communities in honor of a special person in my life.

Enclosed please find a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Please charge my account for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_  Visa  MasterCard  American Express

Cardholder's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Please make this donation in honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please notify the following people of this donation: (include mailing address)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Return to: UMaine Center on Aging, 5723 D.P. Corbett Business Bldg., Orono, ME 04469-5723



## Hats off to RSVP volunteers!



*Attendees at the ceremony*

The Retired and Senior Volunteer program held their annual volunteer recognition ceremony on September 22, 2004. The event was attended by over 300 RSVP volunteers. First Lady Karen Baldacci opened the event, to the delight of the attendees. Dot & The Has-Beens, Guitarist Randy Lindsey, and television personality Ric Tyler rounded out the afternoon.



*Surprise!*



*UMaine CoA  
Director Dr.  
Lenard Kaye  
presents award*



*Above: Randy Lindsey leads the sing a long*



*Dot & The Has-Beens  
perform*



*Below: More honored guests*