

Office for the Aging News

Niagara County Office for the Aging

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www.niagaracounty.com/ofa

March – April 2007

Director's Column

Every four years, every local Office for the Aging is required to submit to the New York State Office its plan for the coming four years. The last 4 Year Plan submitted by our office covered April 2004 – March 2008. Before this year is out, we will be submitting our plan for the next four years: April 2008 – March 2012.

We need as much information as possible to insure that the 4 Year Plan we create truly matches the needs of our local senior population. To collect some of that information, there is a survey titled "2007 Needs Assessment" on the last two pages of this newsletter. If you are reading this, then you probably have an interest in Niagara County seniors and the services they need and want. Please take a few moments to complete the survey and return it to our office so that we can make YOUR input part of what we use to plan our next four years. We want nothing more than to give our local seniors what they need. We need you to tell us what that is.

Thank you.

Chris Richbart
Director

Health and Nutrition Update



Your Kidneys: Tips on How They Help Keep Your Body Healthy

Your kidneys may be small, but they perform many vital functions that help maintain your overall health, including filtering wastes and excess fluids from your blood. Chronic kidney disease may lead to complete kidney failure and the need for dialysis treatments or kidney transplant to sustain life. While effective treatments are available for many chronic kidney diseases, many people are unaware that chronic kidney disease can often be prevented. Here are some important facts about how your kidneys work, how disease may affect them, and how you can prevent chronic kidney disease.

- ♥ Your kidneys are about the size of your fist. They are located in the back, just below the rib cage. The kidney's main job is to filter waste products and excess fluid from your blood. Every day, the kidneys filter about 200 quarts of fluid. About two quarts leave the body in the form of urine, while the remainder is retained in the body.



- ♥ In addition to filtering wastes from the blood, the kidneys also perform these important jobs: release hormones that help regulate blood pressure; control the production of red blood cells; make vitamins that control growth.
- ♥ When the kidneys no longer perform these functions adequately due to injury or disease, wastes and excess fluid build up in the blood. The early warning signs that your kidneys may not be working well are: high blood pressure; blood and/or protein in the urine; BUN and creatinine blood tests outside the normal range; glomerular filtration rate (GFR), less than 90; more frequent urination, particularly at night; difficult or painful urination; puffiness around the eyes or swelling of hands or feet.
- ♥ Anyone can develop chronic kidney disease, but some people have an increased chance of developing kidney disease. This includes those who: have a family history of kidney disease; have diabetes; have high blood pressure; are older; are African American, Hispanic American, Asian American or American Indian.
- ♥ In the U.S., the two leading causes of kidney failure – which requires regular dialysis or transplantation to sustain life – are diabetes and high blood pressure. When these two diseases are controlled by treatment, the associated chronic kidney disease can often be

prevented or slowed down. Many effective drugs are available to treat high blood pressure. In addition, healthy lifestyle changes, such as losing excess weight and regular exercise, often help to control and may even prevent high blood pressure. Careful control of blood sugar in diabetics helps to prevent complications including chronic kidney disease, heart problems and strokes.

More than 20 million Americans have chronic kidney disease. Another 20 million are at increased risk for developing kidney disease, and many are not aware of it. Kidney disease may be silent in the early stages. It is important for doctors to include blood and urine tests that check kidneys as part of regular medical checkups. Early detection and treatment may help prevent chronic kidney disease from worsening.



Hot Cross Buns (for breadmaker)

- ¾ cup warm water
- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. skim milk powder
- ¼ cup sugar
- 3/8 tsp. salt
- 1 egg & 1 egg white
- 3 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp. yeast

Put ingredients in bread maker and start on dough program. When 5 minutes of kneading are left, add ¾ cup currants and 1 tsp. cinnamon. Leave in machine till

double. Punch down on floured surface, cover, and let rest 10 minutes. Shape into 12 balls and place on greased 9 X 12 inch pan. Cover and let rise in a warm place till double, about 35-40 minutes.

Mix 1 egg yolk and 2 Tbsp. water. Brush on dough. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. Remove from pan immediately and cool on wire rack.

Make crosses with: ½ cup icing sugar, ¼ tsp. vanilla and ½ - 1 Tbsp. milk.

Information and Assistance – Call 438-4020

The Office for the Aging Information and Assistance staff are available at many locations across the county on a regular basis. They visit all of the senior centers and nutrition sites, and are available at some large club meetings and special events. If a home visit is needed an appointment can be made and someone will come to the home. To find out how to contact the Information and Assistance worker serving your area or schedule a home visit call Susan Christian at 438-4023 at the Office for the Aging.

Most Information & Assistance workers work part time. Their schedules and locations are as follows:

Marie Conde: John Duke Center – Monday through Friday.

Donna Miller: North Tonawanda Senior Center, Wednesday and Thursday from 10 to 12; Bishop Gibbons, Friday from 10 to 12.

Keesha Fields: St. John's AME, Tuesday from 11 to 1; Family Resource Center, 3001 9th St, Thursday from 11 to 1.

Wenonia Myles: Niagara Towers, 3rd Tuesday from 11 to 12; LaSalle Nutrition, 2nd Tuesday from 10:30 to 12:00, Summitview Senior Housing, 7210 Williams Rd. 1st Tuesday of each month from 1:00 to 3:00 PM.

Janice Williams: Sanborn Seniors at Sanborn Fire Hall, 1st Wednesday every 3 months from 10:30 to 12:00; Wheatfield Seniors, every other month the last Wednesday; Lewiston Seniors the 3rd Tuesday from 10:30 to 12:00; Wilson Seniors (Fire Hall) 1st Tuesday from 12:30 to 1:30.

Tina Cur: Barker Fire Hall, quarterly; Lockport Senior Center, 1st & 3rd Tuesday from 10:00 to 12:00 and the 2nd Thursday from 10:00 to 12:00; Gasport Seniors last Wednesday every other month from 10:30 to 12:00; Newfane Seniors (Miller Hose) the 4th Thursday from 10:30 to 12:00; Olcott Fire Hall, quarterly 1st Thursday from 10:30 to 12:00.

Information and Assistance workers also visit others sites in the county. For further information please call the Office at 438-4020.

Questions regarding health insurance can be answered by Information and Assistance staff at the locations mentioned above or by HIICAP volunteers by appointment, and at the Lockport Senior Centre, North Tonawanda Senior Center and John

Duke Center. (Call 438-4020 for times).

In the 1440's a law was set forth in England that a man was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb. Hence we have the "Rule of Thumb".

Reminder

Call for appointments – OFA 716-438-4020. We know many folks like to drop by the office when they have a question or a concern. However, we would appreciate it if you would call to set up an appointment if possible. In this way it allows us to better prepare for your visit in getting the necessary paperwork or records pulled together. Further, it allows us to estimate the time necessary for the particular reason for your visit. That way we can give you the fullest attention to the matter and not be rushed by the clock. Therefore, it's always best to call and make an appointment so that we can give you the time and attention to serve you better.



Special One Time Tax Credit on Your 2006 Tax return

When it comes time to prepare and file your 2006 tax return, make sure you don't overlook the "federal excise tax refund credit." You claim the credit on line 71 of your form 1040. A similar line will be available if you file the short form 1040A. If you have family or friends who

no longer file a tax return and they have their own land phone in their home and have been paying a phone bill for years, make sure they know about the form 1040EZ-T.

What is this all about? Well the federal excise tax has been charged to your phone bill for years. It is an old tax that was assessed on your toll calls based on how far the call was being made and how much time you talked on that call. When phone companies began to offer flat fee phone service, challenges to the excise tax ended up in federal court in several districts of the country. The challenges pointed out that flat fee/rate phone service had nothing to do with the distance and the length of the phone call. Therefore, the excise tax should/could not be assessed.

The IRS has now conceded this argument. Phone companies have been given notice to stop assessing the federal excise tax as of Aug. 30, 2006. You will most likely see the tax on your September cutoff statement, but it should NOT be on your October bill.

The IRS has announced that a one time credit will be available when you and I file our 2006 tax return.

If you file your return as a single person with just you as a dependent, you get to claim a \$30 credit on line 71 on your 1040. If you file with a child or a parent as your dependent, you claim \$40. If you file your return as a married couple with no children, you claim \$40; married with children, you claim \$50 if one child, \$60 if

two children.

In all cases, the most you get to claim is \$60 – UNLESS you have all your phone bills starting after February 28, 2003 through July 31, 2006, then you can add up the actual tax as it appears on your bills and claim that for a credit.

If you have your actual phone bills and come up with an actual tax amount, you cannot use line 71 on your tax return. You have to complete a special form number 8913 and attach to your tax return.

One final point – this credit is a refundable credit. That means you get this money, no matter how your tax return works out. If you would end up owing the IRS a balance, the refund will reduce that balance you owe. If you end up getting a refund, the credit will be added and you get a bigger refund.

Many years ago in Scotland, a new game was invented. It was ruled "gentlemen only...ladies forbidden"...and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language.



H.E.A.P. and W.R.A.P.

HEAP

What is HEAP? The **Home Energy Assistance Program** is a federal program, which provides a small amount of money (\$50 to \$400 this year) to help low income people who pay their own

utility bills. **The Home Energy Assistance Program is now open.** If you think you qualify call 438-4020 for an application and fill it out and return to our office as soon as possible. Persons with monthly incomes below \$1,764 (1 person) or \$2,307(2 people) will be eligible this year.

WRAP

Related to HEAP is WRAP, which stands for **Weatherization Referral, Assistance and Packaging** program. If a person is eligible for HEAP and is 60 or older, they are eligible for WRAP. WRAP staff help people who are homeowners assess needs for home repairs or modifications that will improve the safety and habitability of their homes. Home visits are made as part of the assessment. Information and advice is offered on what types of repairs or modifications should be made, and referrals are made to a variety of places including the NIACAP Weatherization program.

There is only a very limited amount of money available to help fund needed work for those most in need. Our local program requires that persons who receive any funding must have their homeowner's taxes paid, have no other source of funding, and be unable to pay back loans. Call for more information.

Even if you are not eligible for WRAP, Office for the Aging staff can provide you with information over the phone on related matters.



Surprising Household Cleaners

Dust Lamp with Lint Roller

Original purpose: Restoring your black turtleneck to it's fuzz-free glory.

Aha! Use: Dusting a lamp shade. Run the roller up and down the outside to get rid of what shouldn't be there.

Reward: No citations from Sergeant Clean Sweep, a.k.a. Mom.

Baking Soda as Silver Polisher

Original use: Making cakes rise.

Aha! Use: Polishing silver. Wash tarnished items, and then place on aluminum foil in the bottom of a pot. Add the baking-soda solution (1/4 cup baking soda, a few teaspoons salt, 1 quart boiling water) to cover for a few seconds.

Reward: A chemical reaction that gets the black off the gravy boat so you don't have to.

Car Wax as Fixture Polish

Original Purpose: Shining up the sedan.

Aha! Use: Polishing faucets, sinks, tile, even shower doors. Turtle wax leaves behind a protective barrier against water and soap buildup, so your hard-earned sparkle will last past the next tooth brushing.

Reward: A gleaming bathroom all week long.

From: Real Simple Magazine



Who to call at the Office for the Aging

Do you ever wonder who to ask for when you call the Niagara County Office for the Aging? You can always call our main number, **438-4020**, and ask who can best answer your question, or you can call the same number and ask for one of the people below. Also you can go to our web site at www.niagaracounty.com/ofa.

Director, Christopher Richbart 438-4021
Information and Assistance Program,

Susan Christian 438-4023

Health Insurance Counseling (HIICAP),
 Susan Christian 438-4023

Expanded In-home Service to the Elderly Program (EISEP), Tim Sexton
 438-4039 or 278-8612

Legal Services, Gary Billingsley

Home Delivered Meals, Thomas Chapman 438-4031

Congregate Meal Program, Nutrition Education and Counseling, Glenda Reardon 438-4030

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Lee Puzan 438-4036

Weatherization, Referral and Packaging (WRAP), Lee Puzan 438-4036

Caregiver Program, Nancy Smegelsky
 438-4033

Newsletter Editor, Nancy Smegelsky
Senior Van, Jennifer Schumacher 438-4038



2007 Needs Assessment for the Niagara County Office for the Aging

We greatly appreciate your participation in our survey. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous. Please encourage others to participate in this important process. Please return this form to the Office for the Aging, 111 Main St., Suite 101, Lockport, NY 14094. Please tell us which of the following services are very important, somewhat important, or not very important to you, or could be concerns to you in the next five years.

Place an X in the box that best describes how important each service is to **you personally**.

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Somewhat Important</u>	<u>Not Very Important</u>
1 Health Care			
a. Finding a doctor who accepts Medicaid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Having enough health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Not being able to go to Dr. or dentist because of cost	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Paying for prescription drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Understanding health insurance coverage or filling out forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Income			
a. Having enough money for food, shelter, clothing or medical expenses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Know where to get help handling finances.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Know about Senior Employment possibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Housing			
a. Being able to pay for heat/other utilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Cleaning/tidying your home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Doing outside chores (shoveling, mowing, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Finding reliable help with household repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Financial help with home repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Security			
a. Feeling anxious or afraid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Feeling lonely or depressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Feeling unsafe in your own home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Knowing where to turn for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Transportation			
a. Being able to get to Doctors, dentist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Being able to go shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Using public transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Being able to drive my own car	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Legal			
a. Availability of legal assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Know where to find help with Wills, Power of attorney, Health care proxy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For the following questions, please fill in the answer that most clearly reflects your personal situation. Feel free to add comments at the end of this section.

1 Regarding your present social activities (getting out of the house, seeing friends or relatives, etc.) do you feel you are doing.....

Please check one.

About enough

Too much

Would like to do more

2 If you had trouble caring for yourself at home and didn't have a spouse or friend to provide that care, what would you do

Receive services from family
(at home or nearby)

Pay someone else

Move to an apartment that provided services

Move to a nursing home

Make do as best I can

Other

3 Are you a "Caregiver" for anyone in your household or someone living nearby?

Yes, for my spouse

Yes, for an older person

Yes, for a younger person

No

4 If you are a caregiver, do you feel you need help in....

Dealing with agencies to get services

Handling money matters

Having someone to talk to/counseling

Getting Information

Taking a break to meet your own needs

Not applicable

Comments:

Zip Code: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Living Arrangements:

Live alone

Live with spouse

Live with relative

Personal Opinions:

Which of our services should be expanded?

What is your greatest need at this time?

What do you think are the greatest priorities for the elderly population?

Have you or any family member every used the OFA website? www.niagaracounty.com/ofa