

ACCESS

Unique businesses
serve senior market
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Your Link To Community Resources

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Serving the counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw

Seniors honored for a lifetime of service efforts

You could say it was a heart of compassion that drew Bill and Ellen Head to one another over 30 years ago. The couple met while volunteering at church and quickly discovered they had a lot in common. Among many similarities, they both attended parochial schools and were involved in scouting—two institutions that teach the value of community service.

As their compassion for each other flourished, it soon extended outward to embrace the needs of others.

Now retired, Bill from a sales/engineering career and Ellen from her long-time executive secretarial profession, the couple currently lends a hand to assist family, friends, their church, their Fraser community, citizens of Macomb County, the less fortunate in Southeast Michigan and people across the globe.

Bill and Ellen's efforts have motivated others to give back to their own communities. The couple volunteers for the Meals on Wheels program in Macomb County, an outreach endeavor they've been involved in for the past 11 years. Ellen learned of the program after seeing an ad in the local paper asking for volunteers. She brought it to Bill's attention. "I thought it was a great way to give back to the people who built this country," he said.



Ellen and Bill Head

Unfortunately, many Meals on Wheels programs throughout Southeast Michigan are struggling to match seniors in need with community members to deliver meals due to a dwindling number of volunteers and a rising number of seniors. To tackle the problem in their area, Ellen wrote a letter to the editor of the Macomb Daily addressing the shortage. Her published account drummed up 20 Macomb County volunteers.

Elizabeth Meadows, a family friend who recognized Ellen's talent for persuasion, encouraged the couple to join

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Making your career work for you

The shaky economic downturn has some older adults heading back to work after retirement and others unexpectedly having to shift directions near the end of their careers.

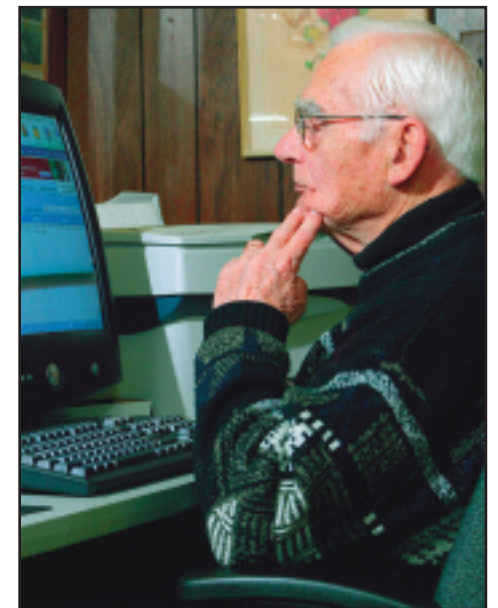
Whichever situation you might find yourself in, Mary McDougall, executive director of Operation ABLE, an affiliated company of Spectrum Human Services, acknowledged, "If you're in a situation where you need to make a change, I often suggest taking time to look at your priorities and then think about what you really want to do." Her company offers training and job search services aimed at helping mature job seekers ages 40 and older. "We work in cooperation with the Michigan Works! Agencies and have training specifically designed for people who are mid-career on up," she said and explained that the rusty area tends to be centered on computers. "We can help provide you with these updated skills."

Kathi Moore, 52, was faced with some big decisions when the economy started to slow back in 2002. The Waterford resident and single mother of two was self-employed as a public relations consultant and the majority of her clients were real estate developers. "About 70 percent of my clients began tightening their belts and PR was one of the first services to go," she said. Moore began looking at her options. Her number one priority was a flexible

schedule. She explained, "My children, Jonah, 23, and Maggie, 17, have always been my main focus. For me, being a good parent means being present and really paying attention to what is going on with them."

Moore was still very interested in the real estate market and wanted to remain connected to the industry. So she decided to obtain her real estate license and pursue a full-time real estate career. That's right, Moore headed right into the storm. The results...

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Lifetime of service continued from page 1

the Macomb Council on Aging. Since joining, the council's membership has nearly doubled in size. Bill has taken on the position of parliamentarian (president's assistant), while Ellen is membership chair and treasurer.

"I thought it was a great way to give back to the people who built this country."

Their Macomb Council on Aging effort led to the couple's involvement in Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) as well as Neighborhood Watch, which Ellen co-chairs.

After observing Bill and Ellen's outreach accomplishments, Charlotte Zuraw, president of the Macomb County Council on Aging, nominated the Heads for the 2008 Senior Citizen

of the Year Award for Service, sponsored by the Michigan Commission and Office of Services to the Aging (OSA), the Michigan State Fair, and Consumers Energy.

According to OSA Director Sharon

Gire, "The Governor's Service Awards are presented every year to honor very special older adults for their valuable contributions to our state. They are a source of inspiration and encouragement to others of all ages."

This "inspiration and encouragement" is especially evident when it comes to Ellen and Bill's family. The

Heads' children and their families are all involved in community service, and Bill and Ellen are especially proud to see their grandchildren becoming involved. "It's heartwarming," said Ellen. "And it makes me so proud."

Aside from the list of organizations the couple serves together, they also donate time individually toward many charities and organizations. One of Bill's favorites is singing at nursing homes and special events with the Chowder Society, part of the Fraternal Order of United Irishmen. One of the most interesting efforts for Ellen is the 8-16 hours per month she spends as a greeter at the Macomb County Jail.

Bill and Ellen have a way of bringing their community together. It's what made them stand-outs for the Senior

Citizen of the Year award for Service. Ellen recalled the day she and Bill took the stage to accept the award over the summer. "They gave us each an unexpected check for \$500 and a plaque. Well, I took Bill's check along with mine, which had the crowd cracking up. Then, of course, I gave it back to him." Bill noted that Ellen's the prankster of the family.

All jokes aside, the Heads credit their compassion toward others as something that brings them closer together. "Working with each other on these different projects definitely strengthens our bond," Bill said. Ellen agreed and admitted, "It's such a wonderful thing to be able to share the experience of helping others with a caring husband like Bill." Her face softened and she added, "He's my rock."

Making your career work for you continued from page 1

"I absolutely love it! There are so many great homes on the market that buyers are having a field day," she said. And while it may not be the kind of market it was a few years back, Moore said, "Hard working realtors are still making a decent living. My strategy is to keep in constant contact with my real estate

clients so they are always up-to-date on opportunities, mortgage rates, and new government programs."

Another part of Moore's career plan is to remain flexible and open to new opportunities. On a slow day, Moore went on a shoot as a movie extra in the film, "Miss January" which was

"If you're in a situation where you need to make a change, I often suggest taking time to look at your priorities and then think about what you really want to do."

shot in Detroit. "This was her first experience. "It was a blast," she said. The best part was that I ended up with a speaking role opposite well-known actress Kim Cattrall. "I made \$1,000 for the day, and I became instantly eligible for a Screen Actor's Guild card," said Moore. Keeping her options open that day was a great strategy. "I've done a few movies since then, made some money, and had the chance to meet several famous actors and actresses," Moore said.

The Michigan Works! Association is nationally recognized as the largest and most progressive workforce development association in the country with agencies throughout the state. Kevin Bulifant, customer service manager at the Ypsilanti location noted, "It's good to remain flexible and keep in mind that everyone you meet could be a potential employer or may have a contact that's looking to employ you." Bulifant also recommended staying in contact with members at organizations you belong to, like church or community outreach groups in order to network your way to a new job or a better opportunity.

Dr. Steve Feldman, a psychiatrist with a private practice in Birmingham who counsels many older adults, offers the following advice for surviving an unexpected late-career job loss or post-retirement job search:

- Accept a job that comes your way, even if it's not your ideal, so that you can network your way to a better position
- Remain in contact with family and friends
- Continue with hobbies and activities of interest
- Keep computer skills up to date (most applications are now filled out by using a computer)
- Learn a new language or take classes in your field
- Seek help from a qualified mental health professional if you find yourself spiraling into a state of depression. "Too often I see people who suffer needlessly or prolong something because they didn't seek help when they needed it," he said.

Feldman stressed, "A couple things I've seen from people who have retained their positions are that they diversify their skills so they're not dispensable and they maintain their strong work ethic, proving they're responsible, reliable employees. This makes them very valuable to their employer," he said.

For more information on Operation ABLE visit, their website at www.operationable.org or call 313-832-0922. To contact the Michigan Works! Association visit www.michiganworks.org or phone 800-285-9675.

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Free tax assistance available for seniors

Need some extra help filing your taxes this year? Having a volunteer tax preparer take a look can be a good way to make sure you're getting all the deductions and credits you are entitled to. Several organizations in Southeast Michigan are offering free help to seniors this tax season.

The AARP Foundation's Tax Aide Program

The AARP Program is the largest free tax assistance and preparation service in the United States. It provides tax-preparation assistance to low-to moderate-income seniors. Tax Aide sites are staffed by trained volunteers and will be operating throughout Southeast Michigan from February 1 through April 1. Most sites are held at senior centers, community centers and libraries and appointments are recommended. To find a

location near you, call the automated Tax Aide Information Line at 888-227-7669 or visit their website at www.aarp.org/money/taxaide.

The Accounting Aide Society

This nonprofit agency will be providing tax assistance at 29 sites in Livingston, Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties from mid-January through mid-April. Eligibility for the program is based on income. Help is available for individuals whose household income is less than \$20,000 annually and couples and families whose yearly income is less than \$42,000. To find a site near you and get details on documents you will need to bring, call 313-647-9620 or visit their website at www.accountingaidsociety.org. A mail-in program is also available for homebound seniors.

ASK the expert



*Katherine Kay, Co-chair
Oakland County AAA 1-B
Consumer Advocacy Team*

Hiring the right caregiver to care for yourself or someone you love can be challenging. Every caregiving situation is unique, and it's got to be the right fit. Understanding your role as an advocate (either for yourself or your loved one), clearly assessing your needs, asking the right questions, and establishing clear expectations and boundaries from the beginning can be the key to making sure you get the most out of your home care situation.

Where should I start when looking for a quality caregiver?

One of the keys to finding the right caregiver is to first carefully assess your own needs. What exactly will the caregiver need to do? Are your needs limited to laundry, meal preparation or light housekeeping? Or do you or your loved one need assistance with personal care, like bathing or getting dressed? Reviewing these needs beforehand will make sure that your caregiver is physically able to do what is required and has the right training. The Area Agency on Aging 1-B is a great place to start. They can help connect you with a reputable home health care agency. In some cases, they can even send out a trained nurse or social worker to help assess the needs of you or your loved one.

What should I look for in a home care agency?

Make sure that the agency performs criminal background checks and that they bond and insure their employees. You want to be sure that the person coming into your home does not have a criminal background and that you or your loved one won't be in any way liable if the caregiver is hurt while in your home. Also, be sure you understand the agency's policies. What will happen if your caregiver calls in sick? Will the agency have someone else

qualified to fill in at the last minute? What is the process if you have concerns or are having a problem with your quality of care?

What traits should I look for in an individual caregiver?

Just as you would with any other person you were thinking of hiring, you want the caregiver to be on time, polite, clean and free from drug or alcohol dependence. You may also want to consider whether or not they seem to be an effective communicator or if they appear to enjoy what they are doing. Caregiving can be a difficult job. Enthusiasm and a true desire to care for others will go a long way in making sure the relationship is a good one.

How can I make sure I get the most out of a caregiving situation?

Be your own advocate. Play an active role in directing your care or the care of your loved one. The agency may know the general services that you require, but you may need to be specific with your caregiver about your needs and expectations. Establish early on what you are expecting the caregiver to do or not do. It may even be helpful to make a list for the caregiver to refer to while in your home. Establishing clear expectations and boundaries right from the start will help make the experience and relationship a positive one for both the caregiver and the person being cared for.

What if a caregiving situation isn't working out?

First, try addressing your concerns with the caregiver directly. If your concerns are not addressed, don't be afraid to get the home care agency involved if you need to. Remember, you must be your own advocate, and there is no need to feel guilty about making your needs clear. Not everyone is a perfect match and home care agencies are used to being asked to reassign caregivers.

The Oakland County Consumer Advocacy Team is a group of MI Choice Medicaid Waiver consumers and caregivers who serve as a voice and advocate for current and potential MI Choice participants. They meet once a month at the AAA 1-B Southfield Office. The team looking for new members and is having an Open House at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24 at the AAA 1-B Southfield Office. For more information, please call Ed Brown at 248-822-5190.



Are you caring for an older adult or person with disabilities?

Be sure to attend the Monroe Aging Consortium:

6th Annual Monroe County Caregiver Fair
Saturday April 25, 2009
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Monroe County Community College
1555 South Raisinville Road
Monroe, MI

Expert presentations on a variety of caregiving topics including Alzheimer's,

legal tips, stress management and the spectrum of long term care housing options. The event is free, and no registration is required. Enjoy complimentary morning refreshments and visit with over 35 local organizations specializing in products and services to assist individuals caring for an older adult or adult with disabilities. For more information call the Area Agency on Aging 1-B at 800-852-7795.

Unique businesses meet the ne

Many new businesses within Southeastern Michigan have developed fresh ideas to help you live a more comfortable lifestyle, often without leaving home. We've profiled four companies that strive to make life better through services tailored with empathy, respect, and professionalism. Here's what we found:

Smart Home Moves® LLC



Ficarra (right) helps client Joan Thornton select colors.

Business name: Smart Home Moves® LLC

What they offer: Scaled interior/exterior plans created to address lifestyle transitions and downsizing, safety, and the changing needs of older adults through design, color, texture, and furnishings.

Owner: Virginia Ficarra

Phone number: 313-330-9800

Website: www.assisteddownsizing.com –or–
www.homedownsizingresources.com

Key distinction: Ficarra was one of the first in the area to stage homes to sell. She is also the creator and co-author of the long-running WDIV television program "Builders Open House," and the author of "Making Color Work," a decorating guide endorsed by America's Master Handyman Glenn Haeger.

A senior herself, Ficarra is using her decades-long passion for color and interior design to help older adults continue to feel comfortable and at home when downsizing or transitioning to an assisted living situation.

Background info: Ficarra credits parents, Sam and Mary, with the early beginnings of her professional training. Sam built homes and Mary created delicate pieces of art. Their passion spurred Ficarra's interest in these areas. She went on to earn a bachelor's in fine arts, with a minor in psychology. She's also taken design courses at the Center for Creative Studies and studied solar home design, and building and marketing.

As family members, friends, and clients began to age and move into senior apartments, assisted living

facilities or smaller homes where they could age in place, Ficarra began applying her color and design expertise to helping them downsize in comfort and style. Ficarra saw an unmet need and helping older adults in their transition to new spaces soon became one of the focuses of Ficarra's interior design and color business. One of Ficarra's specialties is helping people recreate a favorite room when moving to an assisted living facility. She believes it helps make the transition smoother; a springboard to a fresh start while still feeling at home. "I try to help people preserve what they love about their home and transfer these elements into their new space," she explained. One local assisted living facility is now even offering Ficarra's services as an option for their new residents.

Ficarra has also worked with medical and rehabilitation facilities. "A color coach can simply blend the proper colors, patterns, textures, and lighting in order to develop a healthy, green environment," she said.



Business name: Marla's Mobile Miracles

What they offer: A mobile beauty salon that arrives at your door offering personalized services such as hair cuts, color, styles, perms, manicures, pedicures, facials, massages, and make-up application by certified, licensed, insured and bonded professionals.

Owner: Marla Straschewski

Phone number: 248-303-1228

Website: www.marlasmobilemiracles.health.officelive.com

Key distinction: Straschewski radiates energy, compassion, patience, and professionalism upon arrival. Using a gentle touch, she and her team not only transform your look, but also lift your spirits, leaving you with a positive afterglow.

Background info: After 28 years as a successful cosmetologist, Straschewski's life took an unexpected turn in 2001. Straschewski's father and aunt's health were failing and she stepped up to help, juggling their needs with her job and other responsibilities. Two months later, both passed away within six weeks of one another. Her caregiving experience had been life changing. "It was devastating, and yet I realized this was time for personal growth," she said. Following a suggestion from her brother, Straschewski enrolled in and completed a medical assistant program. "But seeing these sweet seniors waiting for hours in the waiting room left me so upset and agitated," she said. "I've always enjoyed helping people in whatever ways I could and I knew right then, this wasn't where I belonged."

Marla's Mobile Miracles



Straschewski cuts a client's hair at a residential care home.

So Straschewski decided to return to her first love: making a person's outer beauty reflect their inner beauty. "The name Marla's Mobile Miracles came about because so many older adults cannot get out of their home due to age, health, and weather conditions," she said and mentioned that walkers and wheelchairs are difficult to manage in ice and snow. So Straschewski and her team of professionals bring the salon to them. Her clientele includes patients with Alzheimer's, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, rheumatoid arthritis; people recovering from surgery and brain injuries; residents in assisted living, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, and hospitals; and those who have a difficult time getting around. "The best medicine is being pampered and fussed over instead of poked and prodded. Let's face it, when you look good, you feel better," she said.



Business name: Someone Waiting Transportation Service

What they offer: A caring, compassionate driver who will take you to your medical appointments and procedures; wait for you in the waiting room; and then transport you back home. Service also provided to run errands.

Owner: Mary Gavin

Phone number: 586-939-3993 office;
248-840-6768 cell

Website: www.someonewaiting.com

Key distinction: Gavin provides top-notch service with your safe passage as her highest priority. Someone Waiting is licensed and insured and Gavin is on the referral and concierge lists of several area hospitals and physician offices. She takes every detail into account, including providing a light-weight wheel chair that can be used following medical procedures; spring water for the ride home; soothing music upon request; heated seats in the wintertime; even sunglasses and a light coat on board just in case.

Needs of a growing senior market



Someone Waiting Transportation Service



Gavin helps a client out of the car.

Background info: Gavin started Someone Waiting Transportation Service after her own out-patient experience. “The hospital staff told me I had to have someone waiting in the waiting room while I was under anesthesia. I really didn’t want to ask my daughter, Michelle, or any of my friends to take a day off work to do this and my other daughter, Marla, lives in Seattle, Washington, so I wasn’t planning to ask her. But she found out and insisted on accompanying me. To be honest, it made me feel better to know there was someone waiting who cared about me.”

Through the process, Gavin realized that there must be others who find themselves in a similar situation. So she decided to open her own business. Gavin spent a lot of time researching safe, comfortable, reliable vehicles that would be easy to enter and exit. She was also careful to attend to the smaller details. For example, when Gavin books an appointment, she sends her client a card confirming the date and time. The weekend prior to the appointment, Gavin calls to remind her client of the appointment. “One of the things the doctor’s office will tell you when you’re having a procedure is to leave all your jewelry and other valuables at home. So I remind my clients of this when I call on the day before our appointment,” Gavin said.

“I take care of my clients by making sure they feel safe and comfortable, especially when they’re anxious about an upcoming procedure. They’re not just people. They’re ‘my people’ and I take the responsibility for their safe transport very seriously,” said Gavin.



Business name: [Seniors Helping Seniors](#)

What they offer: A licensed service that matches seniors in need with seniors who provide assistance at a reasonable hourly rate. The list of non-medical services offered are: cooking, light housekeeping, companionship, personal grooming and dressing, respite care, yard work, mobility assistance, house maintenance/small repairs, and overnight stays (24-hour care).

Branch owners: [Bob and Dawn Neely](#)

Phone number: [248-969-4000](tel:248-969-4000)

Website: www.seniorshelpingseniors.com

Key distinction: Co-founder Kiran Yocom worked in India under Mother Teresa for 14 years. It was through this profound experience that Yocom made it a personal mission to care for those who are unable to care for themselves. She and husband Philip developed Seniors Helping Seniors to provide an avenue for older adults to remain in their own homes, while pairing them with caring and compassionate older adults to provide assistance. This union preserves the dignity and respect of those who give and receive.

Background info: Bob and Dawn discovered Seniors Helping Seniors after their mothers became ill at around the same time. The couple soon realized that, while finding help posed a challenge, there was a benefit to remaining independent at home, surrounded by belongings and memories. Following this experience, Bob and Dawn decided to look into how they could help others.

After meeting with Seniors Helping Seniors, the Neely’s decided to open a branch office where they live in Oxford. “We absolutely love the philosophy behind it,” said Bob who manages daily operations, while Dawn handles client relations and scheduling. “We believe seniors are more comfortable with and more receptive to receiving assistance when it’s provided by a mature adult they consider to be more like a peer or friend,” he said and added that service providers range in age from 50 to 80, with the average age being 68.

“We love working with our senior community and feel very blessed to have the opportunity to help them,” said Dawn.

Seniors Helping Seniors



Bob and Dawn Neely visit with client Dorothea Bentley.

“Our senior providers possess such an amazing depth of knowledge and experience. They bring a tremendous work ethic to the table, consistently demonstrating accountability, responsibility, and punctuality; ideals uncommon in today’s workplace,” said Bob.

By mid-2009, the couple expects the branch office to provide over 800 hours of service per month within their territory, which covers Northern Oakland county. She continued, “We intend to keep building our reputation by providing meaningful employment for many very active, loving, caring and compassionate seniors in our area. And in doing so, our quality service providers will help other seniors remain independent in their homes, preserving the dignity and respect they deserve.”

Remember, these four businesses are just a sampling of the many businesses serving the needs of older adults in our area. The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) maintains an extensive database of senior-focused businesses and services, and would be happy to refer you to someone in your area. You can reach the AAA 1-B’s Information and Assistance line at 800-852-7795. Resource Specialists are available from 8 a.m. through 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

New caregiver resources added to the AAA 1-B website



Visit us at www.aaa1b.com

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B's website has a new Caregiver Resources section that provides those caring for an older or disabled loved one with strategies, services and resources designed to reduce caregiver stress and make daily life easier. Visitors can take the online caregiver stress assessment, learn about coping strategies that have worked for others, and access printable online coupons for local in-home services.

Caregiver self-assessment

Visitors to the site can start with the Caregiver Self-Assessment. The quiz asks a series of 18, mostly yes and no questions that are designed to gauge both physical and mental well being. The assessment takes only a few minutes and is completely private.

According to Kathleen Kueppers, director of community support services at AAA 1-B, a high level of stress could indicate a need to reach out for some additional help. "Most caregivers are out there trying to do this alone," she

said. "That's usually not the best approach for either the caregiver or the person they are caring for. Bringing in some additional help—maybe someone to come in and do some light housekeeping once a week or an adult day care center where mom or dad can stay while they run some much-needed errands—can make a big difference in the quality of life for both caregivers and their loved ones."

Strategies that work

The Strategies That Work section is geared toward offering solutions to problems typically encountered in a specific caregiving situation. Strategies are offered for caring for someone who wanders, caring for someone with dementia, and caring for someone who is bed bound. The strategies list specific concerns or problems caregivers often encounter and then suggest a clear cut strategy. For example, a caregiver might worry about occasionally having to leave a bed-bound loved one alone for short periods of time. The strategy suggests purchasing a personal emergency response system. "These small systems can hang on a chain around a loved one's neck and will allow them to summon emergency help at the touch of a button," explains Kueppers. "Having a system lets the

caregiver leave the house without worrying about having mom or dad unable to get help. It gives everyone a little peace of mind and can be a huge stress reducer."

Printable coupons

The site's most novel offering is the printable coupons that let caregivers try some of the services suggested in the Strategies That Work section at a reduced rate. Coupons are offered for adult day care centers, homemaking services, personal care services, in-home respite providers, private duty nursing providers and personal emergency response systems. The site breaks down the services by county, so users can find a company that's close to them. "Offering the coupons is a great way to let people try the services and see what works for them and their caregiving situation," said Kueppers. "Having the coupons right on the site makes them easy to use. People can print them immediately and get started."

To take the assessment, find strategies and services, or print introductory coupons, please visit www.aaa1b.com. For questions about the site or caregiving, call the Area Agency on Aging 1-B at 800-852-7795.

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Award-winning program challenges participants to get fit and try something new

Wii bowling, kickboxing, line dancing, and volleyball—this is just a sample of some of the activities offered as part of the 100 Days to Health Challenge held this past summer at the Auburn Hills Senior Center. Shelly Chapman, event coordinator at the Auburn Hills Department of Senior Services and one of the program's developers, admits these are probably not activities you would expect to find at most senior centers. "That was one of the goals of the program," she said. "We wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to try something different, something new."

The program, which won a 2008 Innovator Award from the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA), provided 100 days full of health and fitness related activities for adults in their 50s and beyond. "The activities were designed to keep participants informed, educated, socialized and as active as possible at their level of fitness," explained Chapman.

The event kicked off on May 16, 2008—National Senior Health & Fitness Day—and events and activities were held over the next 100 days. An average of one to three activities were held each week and people could participate in as many or few as they liked.

The program focused not only on physical activities, but on creating an overall healthy lifestyle. Healthy cooking classes and shopping tours, held at local restaurants and grocery stores like Trader Joe's and Nino Salvaggio, were part of the curriculum. Several social events—including a bonfire and a barbecue—were also held to help people connect and get to know each other. Chapman said that creating social connections was one of the program's goals, and there are several groups

that became friends as a result of the program. "They continue to walk together, or use the fitness room, and support each other outside of the program," noted Chapman.

A reward system and raffle prizes provided by the program's sponsors helped to keep the program fun and everyone motivated. "We would give out wooden nickels with our name and phone number on them as rewards," explained Chapman. "People earned the nickels for things like coming into the fitness center to work out or attending an event, and we had four

"We wanted to make sure everyone had a chance to try something different, something new."

events during the program where they could redeem the nickels for raffle tickets." Raffle prizes included a night's stay at the Hilton, fitness equipment, coolers, Target gift cards and more.

The 2009 program is now being developed with registration starting in April. The cost is only \$8, which includes all of the classes and events in the 100 Days Challenge. The program is not limited to Auburn Hills residents and is open to everyone, although non-residents may not be able to use all the fitness facilities. For more information about the program, please call the Auburn Hills Senior Center at 248-370-9353.



The program included a walk downtown.

Add something new to your fitness routine

Getting fit isn't something you have to do in a gym or on a treadmill. Anything that gets you up and gets you moving can have a positive impact on your health, and finding something that you enjoy doing is probably the most important element in any fitness routine. Try one of these "outside-the-gym" activities to get you up and moving. As always, check with your physician before beginning any new fitness activity.

Wii sports

What's a Wii? A Wii (pronounced "we") is a video game system with a special controller that senses a player's body movements and incorporates them into the game. Games like bowling, tennis, boxing and baseball let players throw, swing and jab as if they are really playing the game. Although it's not an intense workout (most games only require arm movements and can be played from a seated position if needed), it's still a great way to add some activity and movement. Also,

because it can be played while seated, it's a great option for those with limited mobility. Wii systems can be expensive (they retail for about \$250), but many local libraries and senior centers now have Wii systems available. Some senior centers have even formed bowling and baseball leagues. Check with your local center for more information.

Pickleball

This racket game, which is played with wood paddles and a plastic ball similar to a wiffle ball, combines badminton, ping pong and tennis. It can be played by anywhere from two to four people, and is gaining in popularity, especially among older adults who like the social aspect and the low-impact workout. Leagues are forming in senior centers all over Michigan. Check with your local senior center, or visit the Great Lakes Pickleball Association (mipickleball.usapa.org) to find a game or league near you.

Digital TV switch delayed

Congress has voted to delay the digital television switch, originally scheduled for February 17, to June 12. This means there is still time to prepare.

If you have a recently purchased television, or you subscribe to cable or satellite TV, you are all set. If not, you will need to purchase and install a digital converter box to make sure your TV will be able to receive the digital TV signal.

Coupons, good for \$40 off a converter box, are available through the federal government and can be requested by calling 888-388-2009. Although you may have heard about funds running out for this program, a waiting list is being maintained and coupons are still being distributed as unused coupons expire. It is important to act quickly though as these coupons are available on a first-come, first-served basis and can take more than a month to arrive.

If you have questions or need help, several resources are available. The FCC information line can be reached at 888-225-5322. The Michigan Association of Broadcasters will also be continuing its helpline. It can be reached at 888-643-8809.

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AAAF09

Popular Macomb county speed dating events offer a new way to meet



Phil Werner and Lynda Young get acquainted during the speed dating event.

It's 6 p.m. at the Clinton Township Senior Adult Life Center. Candle-lit tables for two fill the room as men and women, age 50 and older, stream in and seat themselves across from one another. Many have drinks and appetizers in hand, one of the many details provided to get the party started. Some folks are nervous; others are working their way to comfortable as the 6:30 p.m. start draws near.

The action begins with the sound of a bell. Suddenly, the room erupts in conversation as snippets of introductions like, "Hi, my name is..." and "In my spare time, I enjoy....," drift through the air. Some people are taking notes. Others are referring to sample questions in the program as the clock ticks on.

At the four minute mark, a bell sounds and Program Coordinator Donna Tinker announces, "It's time to switch!" Some participants are quick to transition to their next location, while others linger and try to stretch the time. But the rule of speed dating (similar to musical chairs) is to travel to the next table when "time's up" so you're able to meet all participants of the opposite sex by 8:30 p.m., when the affair winds down.

Tinker emphasizes, "We really need to switch to keep everything flowing. You'll have an opportunity to continue conversations later."

The center schedules a dinner/dance concurrently with the speed dating program so that couples can extend the evening and proceed to the dance free of charge. "There's always a live band that plays a nice variety of music," Tinker said.

Phillip Werner of Clinton Township has attended all four speed dating events since the program was first introduced at the center last summer. "I think it's really exciting and interesting. I mean there aren't many places you can go to meet someone if you're single unless you go to a singles bar. And you don't know what you're going to run into there." He admitted to being shy and added, "When you're here, everybody talks to each other, they trust one another, and it's safe."

Speed dating got its start within a Torah class in Los Angeles during the 1990's. Educational Director Rabbi Yaacov Deyo developed the idea to help Jewish singles meet one another. Since then, the concept spread around the world, taking on many themes, including speed dating for older adults.

"I first heard about this on 'Good Morning America'," Tinker said. After researching the idea, she presented the concept to her boss and the rest is history. Since its arrival in Clinton Township, program directors from all over the Metro Detroit area have called

on Tinker for advice in starting their own speed dating events.

"We try to take the emphasis off the romance part of it because some people are very nervous when they arrive." Instead, Tinker says to focus on finding a friend that you can go with to the movies or to a casual meal. "It's an opportunity to find someone you're comfortable with and whose company you enjoy."

The Clinton Township Senior Adult Life Center will host three Speed Dating events this spring, on the third Thursday of the month: March 26th, April 23rd, and May 28th.

Werner suggests arriving by 6 p.m. "Everybody starts sitting down at the tables and you have a chance to get warmed up before the first four-minute conversation begins," he said. To learn more or to register for an upcoming speed dating event, contact the Clinton Township Center at 586-286-9333. Residents from all counties are invited to attend.

Calendar of Events

"Ability is Ageless" Job & Career Fair
Wednesday, March 25, 2009, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Plaza Hotel & Conference Center
16400 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield

This free event is designed for people 40 years of age and older who are seeking employment or exploring training for a new career. For more details, call 313-832-0922 or visit www.operationable.org.

Oakland County Consumer Advocacy Team Open House
Tuesday, March 24, 2009, 1 p.m.

Area Agency on Aging 1-B Oakland Office
29100 Northwestern Highway, Suite 400, Southfield

This group of MI Choice Medicaid Waiver consumers, caregivers and advocates meets once a month in the Area Agency on Agency 1-B's Oakland County office and is looking for new members. For more information call Ed Brown at 248-822-5190.

Healthier Black Elders
Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Bert's Warehouse Theater in the historic Eastern Market
2727 Russell Street, Detroit

Free health screenings begin at 8:45 p.m. Events get underway at 10:30 a.m. and include a motivational presentation by Detroit's new Police Chief James Barren, live music, exercise and dance sessions, followed by a hot, sit-down lunch. Free to guests age 55+ and their caregivers. Pre-registration is required. Call 313-577-2297 for more information.



Advocacy • Action • Answers on Aging

Mission

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the independence, dignity, and quality of life of older adults, family caregivers, and adults with disabilities residing in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties by supporting a comprehensive service delivery system and providing access to community-based care.

Goal

To be the specialists in aging and the point of access to care for individuals 60 and older, family caregivers, and adults with disabilities living in the counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw.

Services

Home Care Services

Personal care (bathing, dressing, etc.), homemaking, home-delivered meals, respite care, chore assistance, home injury control.

Community-Based Services

Adult day services, transportation, congregate meal sites, home delivered meals, out-of-home respite, legal assistance, employment for older workers, elder abuse prevention, services for vision and hearing impaired, long-term care ombudsman, resource advocacy, counseling, and volunteer caregivers.

Information and Assistance Service

Resource specialists can quickly answer questions and access information for callers using a computerized database listing 5,000 senior services and 2,000 providers in southeast Michigan.

Call toll-free, 800-852-7795.

Hours are 8 a.m.- 5 p.m., weekdays. You can also visit www.aaa1b.com

AAA 1-B Access Centers

Livingston/Washtenaw County
734-213-6704
Macomb County 586-226-0309
Monroe County 734-241-2012
Oakland County 248-357-2255
St. Clair County 810-388-0096

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