

THE ADVOCATE



July 2011

OLDER MICHIGANIANS DAY 2011

Annual Advocacy Event a Rousing Success!

Over 750 older adults and advocates traveled to Lansing on June 15 to participate in the fourth annual Older Michiganians Day, the primary advocacy event for the state's area agencies on aging. In addition to festivities on the Capitol lawn that included speeches from lawmakers and the awarding of Senior Citizen of the Year honors, advocates met with their own state Senators and Representatives to discuss the economic and social value of state-supported senior programs and the legislative priorities included in the 2011-2012 Platform for Legislative Action. Priorities include the passage of elder abuse bills, affordable housing and transportation options, funding for senior programs such as home-delivered meals, in-home supports and the MI Choice Medicaid Waiver Program. Advocates carried the message to elected officials that many elder abuse bills pending in the legislature will not cost the state any money, yet significantly improve the lives of many of Michigan's seniors.

One hundred forty advocates from Region 1-B met with 40 of its 43 lawmakers.

The platform document can be found in its entirety at www.oldermichiganiansday.com, or can be mailed to you by calling Ann Langford at (248)262-1282.



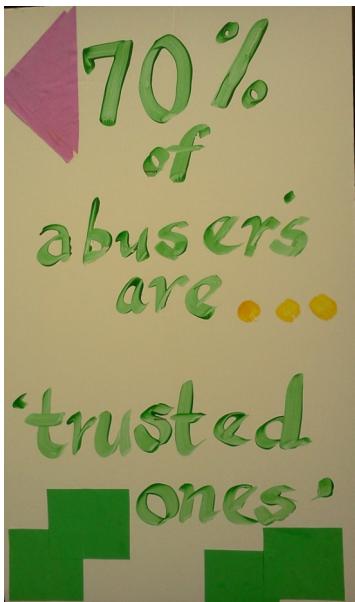
Members of the Gregory Senior Center in Livingston County



Senator James Marleau of District 12 meets with members of Pontiac's Bowens Senior Center



Advocates Harvey Somers, Bob Fox, and Dana Daunter



ELDER ABUSE LEGISLATION A PRIORITY FOR 2011

A package of elder abuse bills has been introduced to the state legislature and advocates are hopefully confident that 2011 will be the year that older adults receive legal protections that combat the growing incidence of physical, emotional and financial abuse. On June 15, in conjunction with the Older Michiganians Day event at the Capitol, a bi-partisan group of state Senators held a press conference to announce the package. Many elder abuse bills have been introduced in previous legislative sessions, although none have been signed into law.

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) staff participates in state and local elder abuse work groups and will offer testimony at legislative committee hearings. Proposals currently before the legislature include:

- Banks will be required to offer training to employees to recognize signs of financial exploitation. (SB 463)
- The Michigan Department of Human Services, State Police, the Attorney General and the Office of Services to the Aging will develop a state model protocol for investigating vulnerable adult abuse. (SB 464)
- Stricter penalties will be imposed for severe financial abuse or fraudulently obtaining a signature. (SB 455, 459, 467, 468)
- Vulnerable adults will be allowed to submit testimony in court to a jury via closed circuit TV or pre-recorded video. (SB 454)
- Protocols will be established for reviewing the cause of death in cases where neglect or harmful behavior by a caregiver is suspected. (SB 457)

Seniors Share their Personal Stories to Advocate for Change

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) has begun an innovative advocacy campaign that allows disadvantaged seniors to share their stories of struggle in their own words, on video. One Away videos spotlight older adults across the country who have had to stop taking their medicine, eat less, and even live in their car due to financial setbacks. Click on [Watch Videos](#) or go to the website, oneaway.org to see them all. According to NCOA, more than 13 million older adults live in or on the edge of poverty, on less than \$22,000 each year. These seniors have to decide every day whether to pay for food, medicine or a place to live. They live one bad break, one accident, or one layoff away from economic disaster.

Darlene of Illinois, 75 years old, is one example. She spends every day caring for her husband of 59 years, Bill. The couple's savings were depleted when Bill's health began to decline in 1993, so Darlene decided to stop taking her medications so she could afford his. They ended up having to file bankruptcy. In another video, Michelle from Maryland, aged 62, talks about the job she found through the local Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Before she turned to SCSEP, Michelle struggled with paying her bills. She received an eviction notice and had her utilities turned off. Federal funding for SCSEP was cut 45% in 2011 and is at risk again in 2012. "One Away has already received thousands of stories of struggle from seniors nationwide," said Jim Firman, president and CEO of NCOA. "This campaign is about elevating their voices, so Congress can catch up to the realities of their constituents and develop concrete solutions to make life better for our seniors."