

ACCESS

Journeying
Through
Grief
Pages 4 & 5



Your Link To Community Resources

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

Innovations Help Seniors Live and Heal Comfortably and Safely



The Medilodge Facility in Milford features many amenities designed to help residents feel at home.

A rising population of older adults is driving innovative approaches in the field of senior wellness here in metro Detroit and around the country. Businesses are honing in on what this growing population of seniors needs and wants, especially as it relates to healthcare.

Instead of a traditional, institutional-style nursing home facility, imagine a home where residents can choose when they plan to wake up, what they prefer to eat and when they plan to have their meals. They can select what color the private bedroom should be painted or fix a snack for visiting family and friends in an open kitchen area.

This welcoming place, designed to encourage socialization through features such as a large, open living room with an inviting hearth, is called a Green House® and is located at Presbyterian Villages of Michigan's Village of Redford. This Green House concept is taking shape in Michigan as well as all over the country, having been originally introduced by visionary baby boomer Dr. William H. Thomas, founder of Eden Alternative. His revolutionary approach to the nursing home experience provides a connected, engaging social environment to eliminate loneliness, boredom, and isolation; which can manifest when an individual loses their sense of empowerment.

continued on page 2

Medicare Changes Add More Preventive Benefits and Start to Shrink the Doughnut Hole

In 2010, seniors began to see the effect of the Healthcare Reform Bill on their Medicare plans. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which became law on March 22, 2010, changes Medicare coverage and costs in three key ways:

- 1) It reduces government subsidies paid to Medicare Advantage providers,
- 2) It gives access to more preventative benefits and tests, and
- 3) It begins to slowly shrink the "doughnut hole" coverage gap in prescription coverage.

Medicare Advantage Changes

The changes to Medicare Advantage plans seem to have caused the most confusion and concern for recipients. "In the past, the government has reimbursed companies more per person for Medicare Advantage plans," explained Jennifer Houghton, access and benefits supervisor for the Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B). "That subsidy is going to be reduced over the next few years, beginning in 2011. This has led to some concern that Medicare Advantage Plans would be phased out. Although some specific plans may end up being discontinued, I believe most companies will continue to offer advantage plans."

Because of the subsidy reduction, it's likely that if you have an advantage plan, you are more likely to see bigger changes this year than you have in the past. "These changes won't necessarily be negative," said Houghton. "It depends on your individual situation and needs. It's best just to remember to be a good consumer and consider the changes objectively and carefully. Shop around and compare your plan to other offerings to make sure it's still the best choice in terms of coverage, price, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs."

continued on page 2



Inside This Issue

Ask the Expert	3
Journeying Through Grief	4
Cards Help Bring Holidays to Seniors In Need	7
Power Up Your Brain	8

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Innovations Help Seniors

continued from page 1

This person-centered concept is weaving its way into other areas of healthcare as well. MediLodge of Milford, nestled in the woods, is not your typical rehabilitation center. It's a healing environment that offers all you've come to expect from a short-term rehabilitation facility, combined with a holistic wellness program and more. The MediLodge difference is in the details. Five-star amenities are customized to include meals prepared by a gourmet chef, specialty bathing suites, 24-hour room service, wireless internet, entertainment, and a JavaLodge, where you can relax and enjoy the company of family and friends. Lodgers can rejuvenate with an on-site visit to the RevitaLodge, a full service spa and salon that includes amenities such as facials and 12 forms of healing massage. While many of the direct costs of care and rehabilitation at MediLodge will be covered by Medicare, just as they would be at a more traditional facility, some of the extras, like the spa services, etc. may not be covered.

On the homecare front, there are many new gadgets and services, some hitting the market and others in the works. Zigbee technology has partnered with AT&T to develop advancements that make it even easier to receive follow-up care from your doctor without

leaving your front door. They're currently testing a wide range of personal, "telehealth" devices that can remotely transmit vital signs to your healthcare professional. There's a smart scale to relay your weight, which is a good indicator of how your recovery is progressing. A wireless, battery-powered pulse-oximeter is used to measure your breathing and oxygen levels. And if balance is an issue, Smart Slippers can identify when you are experiencing problems that could lead to a fall.

The devices are linked remotely to your healthcare provider's office. Once your physician analyzes the data, you are contacted with any changes to your treatment plan. These advancements are still in the trial stages.

Already on the market, Guardian Medical Monitoring's Virtually There Care video system lets families check in with loved ones remotely and monitor care day or night, using any browser, iPhone or IP assisted phone or device. Five family members or friends can utilize the system from their locations simultaneously, making it possible for more than one person to monitor care. For more information, call 888-349-2400 or visit online at www.guardianmedicalmonitoring.com.

Other technological advances are benefiting those with Alzheimer's

disease. A common fear with Alzheimer's is wandering or becoming lost. EmSeeQ addresses this concern using a small wireless device worn on the wrist. It looks like a watch and tracks the wearer's movements through the existing cellular network. Subscribers can activate the unit 24/7. When activated, the device will place a call to 911, request assistance and relay your loved one's location. In addition, emergency responders are provided with critical information so no time is wasted. And one of the key features is that EmSeeQ has the capability to locate within areas where GPS has proven to be ineffective. For more information, visit their website at www.emfinders.com.

Another similar innovation is the Alzheimer's Association Comfort Zone™, powered by Omnilink. It's the first comprehensive location management system designed specifically for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

Depending upon the stage of the disease, subscribers can choose from a car-mounted mechanism or a wearable device, approximately the size of a cell phone, which can be slipped into a pocket or purse.

Family has the option to observe from their own computer or use the 24/7 monitoring center that has access to vital health records. Wandering incident emergency assistance is available.

The device alerts every 15 to 30 minutes when a loved one has traveled in or out of a zone. The "Find me" feature locates a person within two minutes, while the "Follow me" option delivers updates at intervals of your choice (every two minutes up to every hour). Alerts can be delivered by text message or e-mail to indicate when a loved one enters their home or leaves a predetermined safety zone. Comfort Zone packages begin at \$42.99/month with a \$45 activation fee. Visit www.alz.org/comfortzone or call 877-259-4850 for more information.

Medicare Changes

continued from page 1

There are also changes to the enrollment periods for Medicare Advantage. Typically a person can enroll during two separate enrollment periods: during the Part D enrollment period from November 15 through December 31, and during the Medicare Advantage enrollment period from January 1 through March 31. The Medicare Advantage enrollment period has been eliminated and the Part D enrollment period will be your only chance to enroll in an advantage plan. A Medicare Advantage Disenrollment Period, which allows beneficiaries to switch from an advantage plan to original Medicare and Part D, will also be offered in 2011, from January 1 through February 14.

More Access to Preventive Benefits

Medicare is also eliminating cost sharing for its preventive benefits. Medicare will now pay for preventive benefits at 100 percent. Additionally, Medicare recipients will now be entitled to an annual wellness visit instead of the one-time, "Welcome to Medicare" exam.

The Shrinking Doughnut Hole

In the past, recipients with Medicare Part D prescription coverage have fallen into the "doughnut hole," also called the Coverage Gap, after a person's total drug costs through the Part D plan reach a certain amount. (In 2010, people entered the doughnut hole after \$2,830). Recipients paid for their medications out of pocket until they reached a certain threshold, when

coverage would kick back in (In 2010, recipients had to have total drug costs of \$6,440 in order to get out of the doughnut hole.) The doughnut hole will begin to slowly shrink each year until it disappears completely in 2020. It began in 2010, when recipients who reached the doughnut hole were mailed a one-time payment of \$250. In 2011, recipients who reach the doughnut hole will receive a 50 percent discount on brand name drugs and a 7 percent discount on generic drugs. "Although recipients will receive the drugs at the discounted price, Medicare will count the full price of the medication toward their total prescription spending," said Houghton. "This means that people will spend a lot less money and, hopefully, get out of the doughnut hole a lot sooner."

Getting Help with Choices

If you have questions about your choices or about the changes, the AAA 1-B's Medicare and Medicaid Assistance Program offers one-on-one assistance with Medicare choices. "We have trained counselors and volunteers on staff that can help with your questions over the phone," said Houghton. The agency will also be offering a number of Medicare Part D Assistance Days at different locations throughout the six counties that it serves during the Part D open enrollment period, which runs from November 15 through December 31. To find an event near you, visit www.aaa1b.com or call the Medicare and Medicaid Assistance Program at 800-803-7174.

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Eating Healthy For Older Adults

I read a lot about eating healthy. Shouldn't older people just follow these same rules, or are there other things I should be doing because of my age?

The USDA Food Guide has key recommendations for older adults

- **Drink before you are overly thirsty** by consuming water throughout the day. As we age, our sense of thirst becomes less sensitive and it becomes easier to become dehydrated.
- **Choose nutrient-dense foods** high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, lean protein, and healthy fats like vegetable oils with no transfats.
- **Selecting fresh, in-season foods.** When buying packaged foods, check ingredients, compare and read labels. Ingredients are listed in order of their proportion in the food from highest to lowest. The first three ingredients listed are the most important to identify.

Are there any foods I should avoid altogether?

Avoid foods with empty calories that are too high in added sugars and fats or low in recommended nutrients like Vitamins A, C, D, and Minerals such as iron, potassium, zinc and calcium.

Sugars may be listed under a variety of different names, including high-

fructose corn syrup, corn syrup solids, brown sugar, honey, and dextrose just to name a few.

Look for added sodium or salt on labels. Be conservative when it comes to adding seasonings like garlic salt or popcorn flavorings. Canned soups, canned vegetables, frozen dinners, boxed seasoning packets and sauces can also contain surprisingly high amounts of sodium. Instead use herbs and freshly ground spices to add flavor and enhance taste.

Fruits and vegetables spoil so quickly and it's hard for me to get to the grocery store on a regular basis. How can I make sure I'm getting what I need?

Frozen fruits and vegetables can be just as nutritionally valuable as their fresh counterparts. Fresh, in season, fruits and veggies like corn, blueberries, pitted cherries or raspberries can be packaged in individual containers and used during winter months. You can also purchase a variety of frozen vegetables in bags that can be resealed and used for different meals. Remember to select brands packaged with no added sugar or salt.

I'm diabetic. In the past I've struggled to keep on track during the holidays, especially when visiting or going to special events. Any quick tips that can help?

Don't skip meals before going to a holiday celebration. Going to event hungry can lead to overeating.

Put lots of color on your plate as a way to get the widest variety of healthy foods. Put the bright fruits and vegetables in the center and surround with meats and complex carbohydrates like brown rice, whole grain pastas, and high-fiber, whole-grain breads.

Avoid high-salt, high-fat snacks. A handful of nuts can have as many calories as a serving of lean chop or roast. Instead, opt for low-fat protein rich foods like chicken, eggs and seafood; seasonal fruits and vegetables or complex carbohydrates

Go walking before or after meals and keep up other daily forms of activity as part of your work-out routine. Call a friend or include your spouse or a family member. Having a partner can be a great way to stay motivated during those long winter months.

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Journeying Through Grief

Grief and loss is something most older adults must face at some point. And while everyone's journey through grief is different, finding help, support and a coping strategy is essential. Here's a peek into how grief support meetings can help as well some ideas on coping after someone close to you is gone.

It's 10 a.m. on the second Friday of the month and eight people are seated in a private office at the Older Persons' Commission Senior Center (OPC) in Rochester. Group facilitator, Donna Beerer, gets everyone's attention and the meeting is underway. She explains that members of this group lost a loved one at least three years ago and even though they "graduated" from their grief support sessions, all 14 of the original members continue to remain in touch at least once a month. For this group, the continued support of one another is one of the keys to getting through their loss. Today, they are speaking candidly about the emotions that they continue to work through every day.

Helene has a commanding presence with a smile and gregarious spirit that embraces all in the room. Her husband Louie died suddenly five years ago, leaving Helene feeling empty and alone.

"Each of us has suffered many losses. But when we get together, we greet each other with hugs," she says.

I thought I could handle everything in life," she continues. "I'm such a strong personality. I wouldn't let myself grieve. I would not be a failure. 'Nobody's going to tell me....' And ah (she laughs)...I've changed."

Ada is another member. Her husband of over 46 years died suddenly of a heart attack while they were vacationing in Florida.

"After he died eight years ago, I thought I was going out of my mind," she says. "You know sometimes you feel like you want to call somebody but you don't want to bother them."

Eddie, whose wife of 59 years, Jean, died following a diagnosis of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, piggybacks on Ada's comment. "That's my problem," he says. "I don't like to bother anybody. I didn't like to bother my kids."



The grief support group at the Older Persons Commission in Rochester gives members a chance to share and connect with others while working through their grief.

Joe is next to speak. He's gleaned a lot of wisdom in the three years since his wife Grace died following a stroke.

"The secret is to be busy," he adds. "I found that in helping others, it was helping me. I miss my wife. I see things everyday and I don't know if it's my imagination or a coincidence. Yesterday, I took my car in and had some work done on it and when I picked up the car, there was a sticker on the windshield for when I have to take the car back. The date on there is 12/8 which is Grace's birthday. I smile and say to myself, 'OK honey, you're here.' My next stop, I pick up a magazine and open it up and there's a cosmetic ad for 'Grace' and it explains what Grace is. You see, she's always around."

"Her presence motivates me to help others," he continues. "When I volunteer, I feel better when I leave, and I think to myself that they're the ones helping me. Life goes on. None of our spouses would want us to mope around and feel sorry for ourselves."

Betty, whose husband was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and died unexpectedly three years ago of a blood clot in his stomach, joins in.



Graduates of a grief support group at the Older Person's Commission in Rochester still meet about once a month. Front row (from left): Joe DiTrapani, Group Facilitator Donna Beerer, Edwin Steinke and Helene Venegoni. Middle row (from left): Fred Quinn, Ada Crocenzi, Betty Barry and Angie Palazzolo. Back row (from left): Loretta Torres, Billie Ford, Mary Jane Galietto, Joyce Swart, Poline Winn, Shirley Gray, Louise Bandemer, Art Cohen and Norma Roulard.

"I think a big factor that comes into play when you lose your mate is that you've been doing things with other couples and that's part of your life," she says. "My husband was very active and he wanted to do things all the time when he was well. We were very busy. Then all of a sudden, you have this new life that you need to make busy on your own."

Ada adds, "You feel like a third wheel sometimes. I was invited to a dinner dance with my son and his wife. And I always feel funny when I'm around."

Joe counters, "There's a reason they asked you to go Ada. They want you to join in and that's the help. No matter what happens to us, out of something bad, comes something good."

Joe believes the group setting can be especially helpful for the men in the group. "Men don't usually like to open up and talk with anybody," he reflects. "It's a thing that we're born with...macho...I don't know. But all of us feel the same way. We help one another and pitch in whenever necessary. We support one another."

Luan's husband passed away five years ago from complications from Parkinson's. Following her husband's death and the subsequent deaths of other friends, she dealt with loneliness until spotting an ad in the paper for the OPC grief support group. Now she's realized a sense of gratefulness.

"There are days that I feel down," she says. "But I'm a great believer that the good Lord has a plan for all of us."

Joe nods in agreement, "Here's something we all have to have in our life: faith, family and friends...in that order. If you have that, you've got everything."

All expressed that Donna, a staff member at OPC and their group's facilitator, has had a tremendous impact on their lives. Through her gentle guidance, they were able to find their way to a more connected life. "Donna's such a wonderful person," said Helene. "We're grateful for her skill and support."

According to Washtenaw County clinical psychologist and certified traumatologist Cendra Lynn, Ph.D., "The experience of grief is very individual. It depends upon the person and their loss. This is evident in the grief support meeting dialogue. There are no set patterns or stages to help prepare for this process. Grief is the one thing you don't get to prepare for in advance," she said.

However, certain aspects of grief can be similar:

Intellectual

Reflection, "what if..." scenarios, coming to terms with everything connected with the loss

Physical

Becoming ill, anxiety, insomnia, feeling of emptiness in the pit of the stomach, weak knees, hallucinations or delusions, shortness of breath, depression, disorganization, withdrawal, loss of appetite, sense of unreality, death

Emotional

Anger, frustration, guilt, life feeling chaotic and frightening, loneliness, pain

Spiritual

Search for meaning, loss or increase of faith, awareness of life's fragility, experiences of sensing the presence of the deceased

Dr. Lynn is founder of GriefNet.org, an online site offering support and information from the comfort of home, for those dealing with major loss. The site has nearly 50 different support groups depending upon the grief issues you're experiencing.

Due to the fact that the grieving process differs for every individual, there's no timeframe as to how long the process will take. "The most helpful thing you can do is to cut yourself a lot of slack," said Dr. Lynn. "Give yourself tons of time to heal and don't let anyone rush you."

Anniversaries, birthdays and holidays can bring back a flood of emotions, especially within the first

14 Ways to Memorialize Your Loved One

1. Have a memory book at the funeral for guests to retell a favorite memory or explain how their life was influenced by your loved one.
2. Write a story about their life or paint a picture with this as the theme.
3. Plant a tree or special plant in the garden. It's a beautiful way to mark the time.
4. Cook their favorite dish or specialty at an annual family celebration.
5. Make a quilt of their clothing.
6. Donate library books in their name. The library will place a tribute label on the inside cover with your loved one's name on it.
7. Donate to a special cause or charity in their name.
8. Do a tribute dance at an upcoming celebration where family joins in.
9. Create a memorial scholarship.
10. Walk or run for a cause in their name.
11. Put together a slide show to your loved one's favorite songs.
12. Donate a gift for a needy family on your loved one's birthday.
13. Memorialize the name of your loved one on a brick, stone, park bench in a favorite location.
14. Make a memento box of their favorite treasures. This could be mounted on display.

Contact the Area Agency on Aging 1-B at 800-852-7795 for more information on grief support groups.

Don't burden yourself. Traditions, preparations, decorations, expectations can add extra weight. Give yourself permission to put certain things aside until you gain a sense of emotional strength. Don't complicate your life by spending too much money, eating too many sweets, or overindulging with alcohol and other substances.

Volunteering can be good medicine. Reaching out to help others can also help with the healing process.

Remember your loved one. Light a candle, say a prayer, journal your thoughts. See the box above for more ideas.

"There's no right or wrong way to grieve, but there are signs that may indicate a need for professional help," said Dr. Lynn. She stressed that indicators could be:

- If you're having a very difficult time sleeping.
- When you are not paying attention to basic health and hygiene.
- If diagnosed with a serious physical illness that you or your doctor connect to the loss.

Angie, one of the grief support group members who sat quietly until the end of the meeting admitted, "It was very difficult for me to join a group. My husband passed away due to complications from Alzheimer's and the last years of his life were very hard for me. I suffered along with him." Angie mentioned that it was tough to leave the house. Many of her friends were involved at the OPC and they helped her to connect with the grief support group.

Three years later, Angie observed, "We are all very fortunate to have bonded and stayed together throughout this time. We're all going through the same thing and we feel safe to open up with one another." In fact, two of the members ended up getting married. Donna remarked, "We're not matchmakers here (everyone laughs). What's great is that this group can go out together without the pressure of demands or expectations. It's a safe environment to connect with one another."



Adult Day Programs Use Art to Engage Dementia Patients

Art and art therapy are weekly and even daily activities at many Adult Day programs across Michigan, as centers strive to provide a more enriching experience for their participants. Research proves that individuals with dementia who express themselves through art benefit by experiencing positive changes in mood, increased self-esteem, and even a reduction in problematic behaviors such as wandering, verbal outbursts and aggression.

"We have experienced that art helps improve our patient's self esteem, since so many of their past capabilities have diminished," said Diana Veselka, M. Ed., board-certified and registered art therapist at Sakwa Adult Day Program at the Alzheimer's Association – Greater Michigan Chapter. "By creating art, they see they can still be successful. It helps relieve their minds from their usual thoughts, as they focus on being able to safely interact and communicate with the outside world through their artwork."

Eighty-year old Louise Brown was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's and attends the Sakwa program three days a week. There she participates in group projects, and well as individual drawing, painting, and designing activities in the art therapy class,

which is held every Thursday afternoon for about 90 minutes. Music is often playing in the background.

"After one of the first art therapy classes she attended, my mother recalled a childhood memory that she had never shared with me before," said Martina Gifford, Louise's daughter. "I couldn't believe it. She's drawn pictures throughout her life but getting back to art has stimulated her memory, and made her feel better, more relaxed and at home."

A national landmark "Creativity and Aging Study" by Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., founder and director of the Center on Aging, Health and Humanities of The George Washington University, found that older adults who participate in professional art programs experience improved overall health and morale and decreased doctor visits, medication use, falls, and loneliness.

Cathy Backos, Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) contract respite manager, has been



Eighty-year old Louise Brown paints at the Sakwa Adult Day Program.

working closely with the Adult Day programs that the AAA 1-B helps support to incorporate art into the programs.

"This past year we had the opportunity to partner with Molly Landis, Studio One coordinator from the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center who provided two, half-day trainings for the Adult Day program staff on how to engage a person with dementia in a creative art experience, whether that is creating a piece of art or discussing a piece of art created by a famous artist," Backos explained. "Incorporating art into these programs is so important because it gives clients with cognitive loss and/or disabilities alternative opportunities for self expression."

Adult Day service programs specialize in providing care for older adults and persons with disabilities during the day so that caregivers can go to work, enjoy a personal hobby or interest, or just take a break from their responsibilities. Most programs offer meals, social activities, transportation and personal care, are available seven to ten hours a day, and specialize in serving individuals with dementia. To find an adult day program near you, call the AAA 1-B at 800-852-7795, or visit www.aaa1b.com.



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Cards Help Bring Holidays to Seniors In Need



Holiday card features a photo by Michigan wildlife artist, Carl Sams II.

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B (AAA 1-B) has again produced a unique holiday card to help support its Holiday Meals on Wheels program. This year, the card features artwork donated by nationally known Michigan wildlife artist, Carl Sams II. Sams is best-known for his series of New York Times bestselling children's books: "Lost in the Woods," "Stranger in the Woods," and "First Snow in the Woods."

Proceeds from the sale of the cards will help support the AAA 1-B Holiday Meals on Wheels programs and bring warm meals and companionship to frail, homebound seniors on the holidays.

Meals are delivered on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Hanukkah, New Year's Day, Easter and Passover.

Direct Donations Also Needed

Direct donations to the Holiday Meals on Wheels program are also needed.

Direct donations can be made by calling the AAA 1-B at 800-852-7795, or visiting our website at www.aaa1b.com.

Cost:

\$15 for a pack of 10 holiday cards

How to Buy:

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Caregiver Expo Attracts Record Crowds

An estimated 1,200 caregivers attended the 11th Annual Solutions for Family Caregiver Expo held on Saturday, October 16th at the Sterling Inn in Sterling Heights. Attendees had a chance to visit with over 85 exhibitors and attend presentations on a wide variety of topics. The Area Agency on Aging 1-B would like to extend a special thank you to our sponsors who made this year's event possible.

2010 Solutions for Family Caregiver Expo Sponsors:

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Power Up Your Brain

Your brain has approximately one hundred billion nerve cells and processes every piece of information that enters your world. That's a lot of fire power going on between our ears but often, we give our brains less attention than the car in our garage. So here are some simple things you can do to make your brain purr.

Fuel Up

- A kick start can be found in a healthy, whole-grain breakfast. (Try oats, barley, rye, or wheat.) In fact, participants in a 2007 study were able to improve mental focus for up to 10 hours following a whole-grain breakfast.
- An oil job with the help of foods high in omega 3 fatty acids such as salmon, mackerel, hoki, sardines and tuna at least three times per week. If you prefer ingesting your fish oil in pill form, make sure that the contents are molecularly distilled to screen out toxins.
- A healthy level of vitamin D. You can get this through exposure to the sun, diet, or vitamins. A deficiency can lead to a loss of memory and cognitive function. Obtain a simple blood test through your physician in the spring and fall to determine your current vitamin D levels and an accurate dosage.
- Protection. Antioxidant properties of resveratrol, found in a glass of red wine, help to shield brain neurons. While cruciferous and green leafy vegetables containing vitamin E counteract cell damaging chemicals in the body. Anthocyanins and flavonols found in blueberries improve brain cell communication.

Get Physical

Kicking up your heels can go right to your head. Ongoing research conducted at Columbia University Medical Center indicates that immediately following physical exercise, brain cell growth takes place in parts of your head dedicated to learning and memory. The new cell growth can actually help prevent memory decline.

Give Your Mind a Workout

Mix it up with a different challenge each day. Here are a few ideas:

Add complexity to the activities you currently enjoy. Explore more complicated woodworking projects; learn a new swim stroke; take on a strategic player in chess; concentrate on memorizing the names of those at a gathering; learn a new language; or follow a recipe to create a food you've never attempted before. This can strengthen neural connections.

Tap another area of your brain when you take time to reminisce. By reflecting on positive memories with a friend or a

loved one, you can become recharged to take on current challenges.

Get inspired! Surround yourself with people, places or experiences that spark interest or excitement. This can stretch your brain in different ways, creating new neural connections.

Join an online brain fitness program that offers personalized training to meet your needs. Lumosity, designed by neuroscience and cognitive psychology experts at Stanford and University of California San Francisco, is one such program that can improve basic cognitive functions, memory and attention. A two-month subscription runs \$29.95. For more information, visit www.lumosity.com

Another popular program for \$14.95/month is CogniFit Personal Coach. It can help to improve memory, alertness, and focus. Visit www.cognifit.com for more information. Both programs offer a free trial, enabling you to experience before you subscribe.

Grab Some Downtime

Sleep is important in cementing information to memory. During slow wave sleep, declarative memories (facts or events) are consolidated, while the rapid eye movement sleep stage benefits procedural (how to do things) memory.

Reduce Stress Levels

High cortisol levels are created by the adrenal glands as a reaction to chronic stress. The effect can weaken the hippocampus, an area of the brain assigned to contextual, spatial, and episodic memory. The bad news is that both short-term and long-term stress can have lasting effects on the learning and memory areas of the brain. However, you can manage stress in a variety of ways so brain cells don't take the hit. Give tai chi, yoga, meditation, swimming, massage, aromatherapy and laughter a try. You'll even spur the growth of new brain cells during the learning process.

Calendar of Events

Medicare Part D Assistance Days

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B, along with several community partner organizations, will be holding Medicare Part D Assistance Days throughout the agency's six-county region. Assistance days offer one-on-one counseling on Medicare Part D Prescription Plan choices. Attendees should bring a list of any prescriptions they're taking and the dosages. A complete list of Assistance Days locations can be found at www.aaa1b.com or call 800-803-7174 to find a location near you.

Meals on Wheels Logo Contest Offers \$500 Prize

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B and the Meals on Wheels Programs it helps support are holding a community-wide logo design contest. The winning logo will be used on materials to promote regional Meals on Wheels fundraising events starting June 2011. The contest is open to all Michigan residents (including children) and offers a \$500 prize for the winning entry. Submissions must be received by January 14, 2011. For details on how to enter and a full list of contest rules, please visit

www.aaa1b.com and look under the "News + Events" tab.

Michigan Senior Olympics

January 29, 2010 – February 3, 2011 Athletes 50+ are invited to participate in the MSO senior games. Dancesport, ice hockey, pickleball, badminton, weight lifting and bocce ball are just some of the sports being featured. To register, volunteer, or find out more, call 800-400-8161 or visit www.michiganseniorolympics.org.

Second Annual Judith J. Wahlberg Memorial Lecture

Thursday, February 3, 2011
9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Troy Community Center
3179 Livernois, Troy, MI
Cost: \$35/person with an organizational discount of \$30/person for two or more registered attendees.
This training opportunity for aging network professionals will feature sessions on preventing and responding to difficult behaviors in caregiving, and culture and race in human services. CEUs are available. For more info, contact Kristin Wilson at kwilson@aaa1b.com or 248-262-9226.

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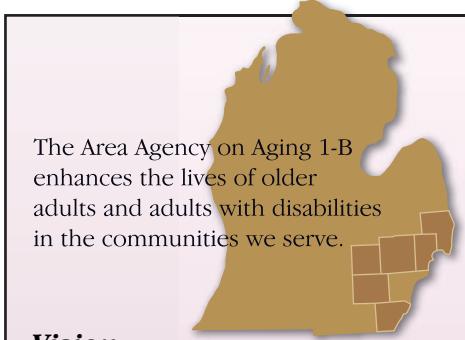
NURSING HOME

If a loved one is going into a nursing home, you need to read the FREE Special Report written by a Mount Clemens Elder Law Attorney called, "The 9 Questions You Must Ask If You or a Loved One Is Going Into a Nursing Home."

For a free copy call toll-free **1.866.828.3111**, and ask for "Report D2." Call today for the information some nursing homes hope you never learn!



Advocacy • Action • Answers on Aging



Vision

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B will be the agency of first choice for advocacy, action, and answers and drive community engagement to ensure that older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers reach their full potential and highest quality of life.

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 over 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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