

## ADRC E-Newsletter; January, 2012



This newsletter may also be viewed as a PDF at [www.PierceADRC.org](http://www.PierceADRC.org) "News & Events" or directly at [www.co.pierce.wa.us/xml/abtus/ourorg/humsvcs/altc/adrc/Jan12news.pdf](http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/xml/abtus/ourorg/humsvcs/altc/adrc/Jan12news.pdf).

### **NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Aging and LTC Providers Network**

First Thursday of each month, 8 – 9 a.m.

Lighthouse Senior Center

5016 E. "A" Street, Tacoma

Contact Bob Riler, ATLC, 798-7384 or [briler@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:briler@co.pierce.wa.us)

Jan 5 – "Problem Gambling and Community Resources"

Speaker: Kate Sansom, Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling

Feb 2 – "Voting Is For Seniors"

Speaker: Julie Anderson, Pierce County Auditory

#### **Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County**

Second Thursday of each month, 7:45 – 9 a.m.

Life Manor Retirement Community

1601 South Union, Tacoma

Contact Julie Moorer at (253) 583-2008

Jan 15 – Networking

Feb 9 – "Why Salespeople Fail" with James Alberson

#### **East County Providers Network**

Third Tuesday of each month, 8 a.m.

Meeting rotates monthly. Call for location.

Contact Laura Fehrenbacher, Stafford Suites, 862-1818

#### **SASH Coffee and Networking for Pierce County**

Ports of Call Restaurant

First Wednesday of each month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Jan 4 – La Quinta Inn Tacoma, 1425 E. 27<sup>th</sup> St.

Contact Beth Pereira at [bethp@sashprogram.com](mailto:bethp@sashprogram.com) or (425) 890-3059

#### **South End (King County) Coalition**

Third Wednesday of each month at 7:45 a.m.

Jan 18 – Canterbury House, 502 29th Street SE, Auburn

Schedule of meeting locations and times at [www.secoalition.com](http://www.secoalition.com)

#### **Rural Health Collaborative**

(Collaboration of service providers in Southeast Pierce County)

Fourth Thursday of each month – 8:30 a.m.

Eatonville Community Center

305 West Center Street, Eatonville

Contact: Gail Elliott, Eatonville Family Agency, 360-832-6805

## **LOCAL SERVICES**

### **Free Tax Sites Throughout Pierce County**

The Pierce County Asset Building Coalition helps working and low-income individuals and families save money through free tax preparation help. Volunteers assist in the preparation of simple federal tax forms and file the returns electronically to speed the receipt of refunds. Credit unions and banks are also present at some of these sites to give tax filers who do not have existing checking or saving accounts the opportunity to establish one prior to filing their returns. By having an account, filers can receive their refunds faster through direct deposit. The PCABC cannot prepare taxes for individuals who own their own business, received any capital gains or losses in the sale of stock, or own a home and paid in excess of \$5,000 in mortgage interest. The list of free tax preparation sites is available at <http://library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1101891855148-513/Tax+Poster+11-2011.pdf>. Days and operation of sites vary. Please call the site nearest to you to confirm hours of operation.

### **American Sign Language for Beginners**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Specialist Christine Seymour will host two special ASL for Beginners classes. Evening classes will be held Mondays, January 23 through March 19, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Morning classes will be held Thursdays, January 26 through March 15, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Classes will be held at TACID, 6315 South 19th St in Tacoma. Registration is \$65. Students are expected to purchase the textbook, "A Basic Course In American Sign Language" by Humpries, Padden, O'Rourke and Paul available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). Contact Christine Seymour at [Christine@cs.dhhrs.org](mailto:Christine@cs.dhhrs.org).

### **Gig Harbor Takes SAIL to Parks**

The Peninsula Fall Prevention Coalition and the City of Gig Harbor have installed S.A.I.L instructional signs along the walking trails in three area parks. Funding was provided by Coalition partners and community supporters. S.A.I.L, Staying Active and Independent for Life, is a series of simple exercises designed to help reduce our risks of suffering a fall related injury by improved balance, muscle tone, and flexibility. Learn more about the Coalition and the new signage at <http://peninsulafallpreventioncoalition.com/>.

### **2012 Cancer Program Offerings**

The 2012 Cancer Program schedule at Harmony Hill is now available at [www.harmonyhill.org](http://www.harmonyhill.org). Find information about upcoming retreats and workshops and how to register. Available at no cost to those who attend thanks to our many supporters. For more information about the Cancer Program or to have a schedule mailed to you, contact [programs@harmonyhill.org](mailto:programs@harmonyhill.org) or (360) 898.2363.

### **Wellness & Recovery Education**

TACID is now offering two 12-week intensive courses designed to enhance the overall wellness of individuals with disabilities. "Holistic Wellness" helps people assess their satisfaction with 8 wellness domains, identify behavior changes that will create balance, and provide them with powerful tools for improving their quality of life. "Pathways to Recovery" is a facilitated journey that will help individuals with mental health challenges identify personal strengths for engaging in the recovery process. Classes are offered at TACID in Tacoma as well as in Graham (courtesy of

Graham-Kapowsin Community Council.) Call Kirsten Welch at (253) 565-9000 ext. 22 for registration information, course dates, and locations.

### **Key Medicaid Standards Published**

Columbia Legal services has produced an updated information sheet on key Medicaid standards. Includes important income and asset eligibility standards as of January, 2012. View at <http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/documents/511331SB%20Key%20Medicaid%20Standards%20as%20of%201-2012.pdf?stateabbrev=WA/>.

### **Nonprofit Finds Aligned Acquisition to Meet both Mission and Margin**

The Hearing, Speech & Deafness Center has acquired the assets and services of a mission-aligned for-profit business, SignOn Interpreting Services. SignOn has a list of 500 clients including schools and universities, health care providers, government agencies, the legal system, corporations, small businesses, nonprofits and the arts. SignOn uses certified, qualified interpreters and specializes in high quality customer service, matching the right sign language interpreter for each situation.

### **L & I Developing Rules on Drugs Used in Nursing Homes**

The Legislature passed SB 5594 this past session, related to the protection of health care workers and their exposure to what are considered hazardous drugs and which also extends to physical plant (building) requirements. Nursing homes are included in the list of affected providers/professions. The Dept. of Labor & Industries has begun developing rules to implement the legislation. Aging Services is expressing concern regarding their process, what seems to be a hurried timeline, and draft rule content. The rule is to become effective in July, 2012. View the complete story at <http://agingwa.blogspot.com/2011/12/l-i-developing-rules-re-drugs-used-in.html>.

### **New Director for DSHS**

Governor Gregoire has selected Robin Arnold-Williams to be the new Secretary of Department of Social and Health Services. Robin served on Utah Governor Mike Leavitt's Cabinet as Director of the State Department of Human Resources from 1997 through 2004 before coming to Washington. She served as DSHS Secretary from March 2005 until December of 2008 when she became the Director of the Governor's Executive Policy Office.

### **Growing Number of Washington Residents Lack Health Insurance**

The number of Washingtonians with no health insurance has reached 1 million, according to a new report from state Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler. About 14.5 percent now have no coverage at all. Among the report's findings: From 2008 through 2010:

- The number of uninsured people in Washington grew by 180,000.
- Charity care by hospitals and health care providers rose 36 percent.
- The percentage of residents without health coverage worsened in 31 of 39 counties.

Starting in 2014, the major provisions of federal health care reform – known as the Affordable Care Act – are slated to take effect. Read more at <http://www.oic.wa.gov/news/2011/12-13-2011.shtml>.

### **Everything You Wanted to Know About SNAP (Basic Food)**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called the Food Stamp program, helps clients with limited income and resources afford to eat well. Yet, only 3 out of 10 eligible

seniors get SNAP. Learn what SNAP is, how it works, and the eligibility criteria. View WA State info and application forms at [https://www.benefitscheckup.org/cf/snap\\_state.cfm?partner\\_id=0](https://www.benefitscheckup.org/cf/snap_state.cfm?partner_id=0).

### **CMS Launches New Medicaid Website**

Mystified by Medicaid? The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have just launched a new website that helps professionals better understand Medicaid. The site (which also includes information about the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP) features a resource center for each state, as well as federal policy guidance, updates about the Affordable Care Act, and program information searchable by population, state, and topic. [Visit Medicaid.gov](http://www.Medicaid.gov)

### **A Homeowner's Guide to Short Sales**

Homeowners who owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth may consider a short sale as a means to sell their home and/or avoid foreclosure. However, a short sale is a very complex transaction that involves numerous issues and risks. A new Washington LawHelp publication is meant to provide an overview of the issues involved in short sales. View at:

<http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/documents/5109916214EN.pdf?stateabbrev=WA>.

### **Local Happenings**

#### **Jan 9 – Family Caregiving 2012: Caring for Families in the Great Recession**

As the economy continues to struggle, more individuals are being cared for by family members in their own homes. Sometimes this involves complex medical care and serious responsibilities. The Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center and community partners will host a series of one-hour discussions exploring how people handle caregiving, what caregiving can look like, the needs that caregivers face and the resources available to residents in Pierce County. The workshops are free and open to the public. Held twice on Jan 9 at:

- 12:10-12:50 p.m., Pierce County Annex Main Conference Room  
2401 S. 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Tacoma
- 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Sound Vista Village  
6633 McDonald Ave, Gig Harbor

#### **Jan 9 – State Legislature in Session**

The 2012 regular session is scheduled to begin Jan. 9 and last 60 days.

#### **Jan 11 – Family Caregiving 2012: Caring for Families in the Great Recession**

As the economy continues to struggle, more individuals are being cared for by family members in their own homes. Sometimes this involves complex medical care and serious responsibilities. The Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center and community partners will host a series of one-hour discussions exploring how people handle caregiving, what caregiving can look like, the needs that caregivers face and the resources available to residents in Pierce County. The workshops are free and open to the public. Held twice on Jan 11 at:

- 12:10 – 12:50 p.m., County-City Building 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Rainier Conference Room  
930 S. Tacoma Avenue, Tacoma
- 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Parkland/Spanaway Library Conference Room  
13718 Pacific Avenue., S., Tacoma

### **Jan 14 – Family Caregiving 2012: Caring for Families in the Great Recession**

As the economy continues to struggle, more individuals are being cared for by family members in their own homes. Sometimes this involves complex medical care and serious responsibilities. The Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center and community partners will host a series of one-hour discussions exploring how people handle caregiving, what caregiving can look like, the needs that caregivers face and the resources available to residents in Pierce County. The workshops are free and open to the public. Held:

- 10:30-11:30 a.m., Sumner Library Conference Room  
116 Fryar Ave., Sumner

### **Jan 18 – DD Legislative Reception**

Policy Briefing 2 – 4 p.m. at United Church of Christ, 110 Eleventh Ave., SE in Olympia.

Reception 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Columbia Room in the Legislative Building. Briefing contact: [Diana@arcwa.org](mailto:Diana@arcwa.org). Reception contact: [david.maltman@ddc.wa.gov](mailto:david.maltman@ddc.wa.gov).

### **Jan 18 – Parents and Grandparents Night**

Community Health Plan of Washington and the Henry T. Schatz Branch of the Boys & Girls Club, Tacoma, are jointly sponsoring “Parents & Grandparents Night” at the Boys & Girls Club in Tacoma. This is a FREE event. No registration. Refreshments provided. Held 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Henry T. Schatz Branch of the Boys & Girls Club, 3875 S 66<sup>th</sup> St. in Tacoma. Contact Marilyn Andrews at (206) 652-7189 or [marilyn.andrews@chpw.org](mailto:marilyn.andrews@chpw.org).

### **Jan 27 – Travel Options Seminar**

Learn about transportation options available in Pierce County and how to travel throughout the region. This free Travel Ambassador workshop is designed to give an overview of travel options in our community. It is especially valuable for social service and agency professionals who serve seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Training covers taking a bus and access route planning, the ORCA card, volunteer driver transportation services, “Bus Buddies,” Medicaid Paratransit and Shuttle service, Beyond the Borders, free transportation in rural Pierce County and more. Space is limited, pre-registration is required. Please register by January 13, 2012. Contact Penny Grellier, Catholic Community Services at [PennyG@ccsww.org](mailto:PennyG@ccsww.org) or (253) 502-2708. Held 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Pierce Transit Training Center, 3720 S 96th St. SW, Lakewood.

### **Feb 1 - Legislative Rally Day**

Join Aging Services of Washington in Olympia as we advocate for providers of senior housing, care and services. Held 9:40-4:00 at the Heritage Room at Capitol Lake, 604 Water St, Olympia.

Register: <http://agingwa.org/wp-content/uploads/Legislative-Rally-Day-Registration-Form.pdf>

### **Feb 3 – National Wear Red Day**

Heart disease kills more women than all cancers combined. Puget Sound goes red. Learn more at <http://goredforwomen.org/wearredday/>.

### **Feb. 23 – 2012 Senior Lobby Day**

Held at the United Churches in downtown Olympia from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Open to all. Details will be posted at [www.waseniorlobby.org/](http://www.waseniorlobby.org/).

### **Mar 10 – Gig Harbor Health and Safety Fair**

Gig Harbor Fire and Medic One will host this event at their headquarters – 10222 Bujacich Rd NW in Gig Harbor from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The event features flu shots, cholesterol and diabetes screenings, tests for hearing, vision PSA, and body composition, skin cancer screenings, consultations with health care professionals and much more. The event is free.

### **March 13 – Pierce County Cancer Survivor Conference**

This free event is open to all people affected by cancer as patients, family members and caregivers. Sponsored by the American Cancer Society and numerous community partners. Held at the Wheelock Student Center at the University of Puget Sound. Vendor opportunities available. Contact John and JoAnne Fletcher at (253) 564-7589 or [joannefle@comcast.net](mailto:joannefle@comcast.net). Event details and registration now open at <http://pccancersurvivorship.org>.

### **Mar 27 – 50+ Worker Employment Fair** (Tentative)

Join AARP for this day-long event to learn about employment tips for individuals 50 and over who are looking to get back into the workforce. Held at Clover Park Technical College. More to come.

### **May 5 – 2012 Tacoma Arthritis Walk: Let's Move Together®**

2012 Tacoma Arthritis Walk is locally presented by ROAD Clinic (Rheumatology, Osteoporosis, and Arthritic Diseases), a part of Franciscan Medical Group. Join “Move in Blue” along scenic Ruston Way in honor of a friend or family member with arthritis. The event features a three-mile and one-mile course, with arthritis information and activities for the entire family. More at [www.tacomaarthritiswalk.kintera.org](http://www.tacomaarthritiswalk.kintera.org). Location: Marine Park, 3931 Ruston Way in Tacoma.

### **June 4 – Challenges in Caregiving: Giving Care, Taking Care**

Keynote speaker for 2012 is Wendy Lustbader, MSW. The annual caregiver conference held at the Tukwila Community Center from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Details and registration available in Spring.

### **June 8-9 – Tacoma Relay for Life, Mt. Tahoma High School**

### **Q&A of the Month**

**Question:** There have been several news stories recently about very intelligent people getting scammed. How can this be, if they are so smart? What can I do to prevent being a victim?

**Answer:** Scammers are smart. Very smart! The scams are effective because the scammers are talented at what they do. They are professionals. The first step to avoiding being taken advantage of is to recognize that fact. The second step is to always take a deep breath. Here are some good rules to observe. 1) If you didn't buy a lottery ticket, you didn't win. 2) If you are told you won something and have to send money to get it, you didn't win. 3) If you get an e-mail and are told that someone is dying or has died and left you money for whatever reason, you're not that lucky. 4) If there is pressure to respond now, it's a scam. 5) If you are asked for any personal information by an unknown person, no matter how innocent, don't give it. 6) If you get an e-mail from the IRS, the State of Washington, the Inspector General or any other “official” entity, with money to refund to you or the threat of legal action, it's phony. Get the phone number for the agency from the telephone directory (not from the e-mail you just received) and check it out. 7) If you get a phone call from a relative or friend who just got jailed in Canada or Mexico and needs money now to get

out, it's a fake. 8) If you get a call "from a bank" who wants to check possible fraud on your account and wants your personal or account information, it's a scam. They already have that information! 9) If you have the chance to buy that solid gold watch or a Caribbean cruise for \$49, it's a scam. 10) If it sounds too good to be true, it really, really is. Don't fall for it.

## **NATIONALLY**

### **Medicare Videos Now In American Sign Language (ASL)**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released an educational video in American Sign Language (ASL) to provide important information about the Medicare program to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The video consists of an overview of the Medicare program, including what Medicare is, who qualifies, the four parts of Medicare (A, B, C, and D), new preventive services under the Affordable Care Act, and help paying Medicare costs. The video will be available on Medicare.gov, cms.gov and the CMS YouTube channel. To access go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eskZVAg7v0o>. To download, go to <http://downloads.cms.gov/media/video/ASLOverview.mp4>. (Source: CMS)

### **New and Improved BenefitsCheckUp Launched**

Ten years – more than 3 million individuals – over \$10.6 billion in benefits identified. That's what NCOA's BenefitsCheckUp® is celebrating along with the launch of an exciting new user-friendly website. If you've never used BenefitsCheckUp® before, now is the time to give it a try. Answer questions to find out if you or someone you know is eligible for public and private benefits that can help pay for food, rent, utilities, medicine, and more. Visit [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org). (Source: NCOA)

### **2012 Older Americans Month Theme**

Older Americans Month is celebrated each May to honor and recognize older Americans for the contributions they make to our families, communities and society. To assist the National Aging Network and other groups plan for activities during the month of May or throughout the year, the Administration on Aging (AoA) issues a theme for Older Americans Month. This year's theme "Never Too Old to Play" encourages older Americans to stay engaged, active and involved in their own lives and in their communities. Additional information coming soon. (Source: NCOA)

### **Protect Yourself From Health Fraud Scams**

Promises of quick fixes and miracle cures can be found everywhere including TV infomercials, radio, direct mail, newspapers, and magazines. Bogus claims including "Lose 30 Pounds in 30 Days!" "Shrinks Tumors!" and "Cured my Diabetes!" are just some of the shady schemes used in health fraud scams. These scams can waste money and lead to delays in getting the proper diagnosis and treatment. To increase awareness about fraudulent claims FDA created a new Health Fraud Scams website [www.fda.gov/healthfraud](http://www.fda.gov/healthfraud). It pulls together videos and articles in English and Spanish on how to avoid health fraud scams, and offers information about products that have been seized, recalled or are the subject of warnings from the agency. To view the videos go to: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270086.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270086.htm) or [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270088.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270088.htm). To view and download the brochure - Don't Be a Victim of Health Fraud Scams – in English, visit:

[www.fda.gov/ucm/groups/fdagov-public/@fdagov-afda-fda4you/documents/document/ucm267638.pdf](http://www.fda.gov/ucm/groups/fdagov-public/@fdagov-afda-fda4you/documents/document/ucm267638.pdf). For information in Spanish, visit: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270137.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ProtectYourself/HealthFraud/ucm270137.htm). (Source: FDA)

### **Captioned Telephone Service Available**

CaptionCall is a new telephone for anyone who has trouble hearing on the phone. Similar to captioned television, CaptionCall uses voice recognition technology to quickly display written captions of what callers say on a large easy-to-see screen. The CaptionCall system works automatically with local phone service providers, with no increase to the monthly bill. The captioning service is free and funded by the FCC so consumers won't have to pay any additional monthly fees to use the CaptionCall system. The one-time license fee (\$149) is waived with promo code MS1109. More info at [www.CaptionCall.com](http://www.CaptionCall.com). (Source: Hearing Loss Association of WA)

### **Medicare General Enrollment Period**

Individuals who do not enroll in Medicare during the 7-month [initial enrollment period](#) have to wait until the next general enrollment period. The general enrollment period is January 1 through March 31 of each year. Anyone who has refused, terminated, or withdrawn from Medicare Part B or Part A can enroll again during this period. If you enroll in Part B or Part A (if you don't get them automatically without paying a premium) during the general enrollment period, your coverage starts on July 1. The cost of Part B may go up 10% for each 12-month period that you could have had Part B but did not take it. You will have to pay this extra 10% for the rest of your life. In addition, you may have to wait until the next annual election period (which is November 15 - December 31 of each year) to enroll in a Medicare drug plan and a late enrollment penalty may apply. For more information call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov). (Source: CMS)

### **Caregiver Free Downloads**

2KeepIt2Gether LLC is a website dedicated to producing organizers and other tools that are easy to use, practical, portable, and quite comprehensive. The site includes free download tools that can be especially helpful to caregivers. Currently offered are: "Daily Medication and Vitamin Log" and "Medical Expenses and Insurance Log." Download at [www.thecareorganizer.com](http://www.thecareorganizer.com). (Source: DSHS)

### **Congress finalizes OAA and other FY12 appropriations**

Congress approved an appropriations package that will fund government agencies through Sept. 30, 2012, including Older Americans Act funding. What does it mean for older adults and the aging services network? Read our summary about funding levels for Administration on Aging programs, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, chronic disease and falls prevention, elder justice, Senior Corps, energy assistance, and more. Summary at [www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/policy-news/congress-finalizes-oaa-and.html](http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/policy-news/congress-finalizes-oaa-and.html). See table of funding levels at [www.ncoa.org/assets/files/pdf/FY12-Request-FINAL-2.pdf](http://www.ncoa.org/assets/files/pdf/FY12-Request-FINAL-2.pdf). (Source: NCOA)

### **New Tool Aims to Bring Better Parkinson's Treatments Faster**

In his continued quest to outfox Parkinson's disease, actor Michael J. Fox is calling on people with Parkinson's and those without the disease to join the Fox Trial Finder, a new web tool that connects volunteers with clinical trials that desperately need Parkinson's patients to test new drugs and other treatments. Fox Trial Finder, created by The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, helps people find clinical trials close to where they live and that may be a good match. It also empowers people by allowing them to take a proactive step in the fight against Parkinson's disease.

People without Parkinson's can also join the Fox Trial Finder as clinical trials often need people without the disease to be studied. View at <http://www.michaeljfox.org/foxtrialfinder.cfm>. (Source: NW Parkinson's Foundation)

### **Disability in America Infographic**

Disabilities affect Americans of all walks of life - from famous Hollywood stars to small town military heroes. In fact, some 54 million Americans – a full 19 percent of the non-institutionalized population – suffer from a physical or cognitive disability. This infographic examines the subject of disability in America and highlights some of the obstacles that disabled Americans face on a daily basis. View at <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/american-disability.php>. (Source: Disabled World)

### **Key Veterans Benefits For Seniors**

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, only 36 percent of eligible veterans are currently receiving VA benefits. There are several options for seniors. Here are three key benefits.

- **VA Aid and Attendance:** For caregivers who are no longer able to provide the amount and quality of care their loved ones need, the Aid and Attendance benefit can be a huge help. This benefit, provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, helps to offset the cost of rent in assisted living communities for veterans and their spouses. Veterans may qualify for up to \$1,632 monthly and surviving spouses may qualify for \$1,055 monthly. For a couple (married veteran and spouse), the maximum benefit is \$1,949.
- **Veterans Non-Service Connected Improved Pension Benefit Program:** One of the most significant benefit programs for veterans which was formed to provide aid to veterans and their surviving family members. The program gives financial assistance to veterans over the age of 65 who have served for at least 90 days and whose income is below a set amount by Congress. Retired veterans often meet these requirements and can receive substantial government aid.
- **Driving evaluations:** Driving skills decrease with age. Through the VA healthcare system, veterans are eligible for an extensive driving evaluation. Veterans can receive benefits like an in-depth personal driving evaluation, patient and family education on the issue, and behind-the-wheel instruction. In addition, veterans can benefit from lessons on defensive driving techniques and vehicle and equipment evaluation by certified professionals. (Source: RAO)

### **MA Plans Get Their Bonuses**

The vast majority – 91 percent - of Medicare Advantage plans will receive bonus payments based on quality star ratings for 2011. A Kaiser Family Foundation study also found that plans with star ratings of 3 or 3.5 (identifying them as average performers) will receive two-thirds of these bonuses. The remaining one-third of bonuses will be given to plans that achieve a star rating of four or higher. On average, MA plans will receive an estimated \$281 bonus per enrollee in 2012, but that amount varies based on a number of factors, including the plan's service area. (Source: KFF)

### **Tool for Understanding Health Reform**

The Kaiser Family Foundation has produced a new interactive feature, "Illustrating Health Reform: How Health Insurance Coverage Will Work," at <http://healthreform.kff.org/profiles.aspx>. It clarifies how individuals and businesses in a variety of situations could be affected by health reform. Featuring the YouToons characters from the Foundation's "Health Reform Hits Main Street"

animated video (<http://healthreform.kff.org/the-animation.aspx>), the new feature makes it easy to see how people's health insurance coverage could change under reform. (Source: KFF)

**New Dosing Instructions for OTC Extra Strength Tylenol Products**

McNeil, the maker of Tylenol, is taking the lead in revising the dosing instructions for Extra Strength Tylenol and products containing acetaminophen. The revised dosing instructions on the OTC label for Extra Strength Tylenol reflect the following changes: Take 2 caplets (1,000 mg) every 6 hours while symptoms last (revised from 2 caplets every 4 to 6 hours; Not to take more than 6 caplets (3,000 mg) in 24 hours, unless directed by a doctor (revised from 8 caplets in 24 hours). Severe liver damage may occur if more than 4,000 mg in 24 hours of acetaminophen is taken. Consult your local pharmacist for more information. (Source: Aging Services of WA)

**Caregiver Initiative Left Out Of FY 2012 Budget**

Congress recently approved spending bills for Fiscal Year 2012, and the analysis from the National Council on Aging indicates a mixed bag for family caregivers. President Obama's "Caregiving Initiative," originally announced in 2010, would have provided an additional \$104.5 million in caregiver supports, but was not included as part of the enacted spending bills for FY 2011. The president re-requested funding for FY 2012 but this funding was also left out of the FY 2012 enacted budget. In the enacted budget for FY 2012, Title IV funding (research in aging) was completely eliminated, and funding for the Alzheimer's Disease Demonstrations were cut 65%. The Senior Community Service Employment Program will remain at the Dept. of Labor with level funding of \$449.1 million while LIHEAP is funded at \$3.5 billion, a large decrease from the \$4.7 billion in FY 2011. More at <http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/policy-news/congress-finalizes-oaa-and.html>. (Source: NCOA)

**PLAN AHEAD – FEBRUARY IS...**

AMD/Low Vision Awareness, Heart, Relationship Wellness and Wise Health Care Consumer Month; Women's Heart (1-7), Muscular Dystrophy Awareness (5-11), Congenital Heart Defect Awareness (6-10), Risk Awareness (7-14), Alzheimer's and Dementia Staff Education (14-21) and Eating Disorders Awareness (26-3/3) Weeks; Wear Red (3), Cancer (4), Shut-in Visitation (11), League of Women Voters (14), Women's Heart (14), Rare Disease (28), and Leap (29) Days.

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This information is provided as a service of the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center and is intended for sharing throughout the county. To receive or discontinue this e-newsletter, please contact Bob Riler at (253) 798-7384 or [briler@co.pierce.wa.us](mailto:briler@co.pierce.wa.us).