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Senior Care News

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Senior Information/Caregiver Resource Center, Southeast Senior Services

Family Caregivers Needed As Advocates

Without action from the Governor and Legislature this session, older Alaskans living in Southeast Alaska will probably see reduced services next year. Nutrition and transportation services, senior centers, care coordination, chore, respite, information and referral, adult day and other family caregiver support services could be cut. The reason --a new funding formula which will adversely affect most villages and small rural communities.

Alaska's State Plan for Senior Services (2008-2011) "new" funding formula will be phased in July 1, 2009, with half of the change implemented, followed by the remaining change July 1, 2010.

Some areas of the state (Fairbanks, Kenai, and Matanuska-Susitna) will see an increase in funds because their senior population is growing at a much faster rate than others. Other places, including Southeast Alaska, will receive a decrease in senior grant funding unless the total amount of program funding is increased.

The Legislature approved an additional \$1 million in funding for senior grants last session. The Alaska Commission on Aging and its advocacy partners are working to obtain \$2 million more for these grant programs from the legislature in the upcoming session. Hopefully, this would prevent an actual funding decrease in any region.

We are looking for family caregiv-

ers and seniors who are willing to write letters, make phone calls, meet with legislators or testify at committee hearings about the need. If you would like to help in these advocacy efforts to maintain the current funding for senior grant programs, please contact Marianne Mills, Program Director of Southeast Senior Services at 907-463-6154 or Marianne.Mills@ccsjuneau.org.



Social Security COLA May Endanger Medicaid Eligibility; Act Now

The new Social Security Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) may push some seniors over the income limit for Medicaid. The senior will need a "Medicaid Income Trust," a legal instrument that creates a separate accounting of the COLA increase. It must be set up NO LATER than the end of January. Help is available from Holly Handler, Alaska Legal Services, at 1-800-789-6426. Without the trust, some seniors on Public Assistance will face uncovered medical bills far in excess of the COLA increase. Establishing a trust lets a senior keep his or her income eligibility for Medicaid. For Applications for Services from Alaska Legal Services, call:

- Statewide Medicaid Income Trust Hotline at 1-800-789-6426.
- Juneau Legal Services 586-6425
- Ketchikan Legal Services 225-6420
- Senior Information /Caregiver Resource Center, 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177.



Know An Isolated Elder?

Do you know a family member or elderly neighbor living alone and isolated in Juneau? Call 463-6177 to share your concerns. Through the Gatekeeper program, we are able to offer assistance to the older individual facing isolation. All referrals are confidential.

TV Changes Coming in February

Older analog TVs with rabbit ears or antennas will NOT work after February 17, 2009, unless they are connected to a cable TV service or use a converter box. Converter box discount coupons can be requested by calling 1-888-388-2009 or on-line at www.DTC2009.gov. The \$40 discount coupons can be used toward the purchase of a TV converter box, which are available locally

from Radio Shacks, Fred Meyer, WalMart, and Sears for \$60 to \$70. If you are a senior or know of a senior needing help with installation of this box, call the SICRC at 463-6177..

Dental For Adults

Some dental services are available for Medicaid adults up to \$1,150 per person annually. Services include preventive and restorative dental care, including exams, cleanings, tooth restorations, crowns, root canals and dentures. Dentists accepting Medicaid patients are in Craig, Haines, Juneau, Sitka and Wrangell. Call 1-800-780-9972 to locate a provider.

Caregiving a \$375 Billion Business

Billion-dollar value of family caregiving rises. Based on the premise that 34 million family caregivers provided an average of 21 hours per week of care to adults with limitations in daily activities, at an average rate of \$10.10 per hour, the value of unpaid caregiving in 2007 was estimated at US \$375 billion, 7% higher than the estimated value of \$350 billion in 2006. Informal caregivers of people 50-plus spent an average of \$5,531 out-of-pocket in 2007 to care for family members. If this is you, call the SICRC to see how we can help you! SOURCE: AARP Public Policy Institute (November

**Senior Information / Caregiver
Resource Center
Contact us for information on senior
services available in any U.S.
community – we'll do the research for
you!**

**Call 463-6177 or
1-866-746-6177 (Toll-free in Alaska)
Or email
seniorinfo@gci.net**

State Director Named for Senior Services

Rebecca Hilgendorf has been named Director of the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services in the Alaska Dept. of Health & Social Services. Hilgendorf had been Acting Director.

Medicaid Recipient Hotline

For help with questions about services covered by the Medical Assistance program, including a list of Medicaid enrolled providers and benefits, call **1-800-780-9972** or e-mail Recipienthelp@FHSC.com.

“Breakfast with the President “ At Centennial Hall January 20

Juneau citizens may watch live the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama on a giant screen at Centennial Hall, Tuesday, January 20. “Breakfast with the President” is from



7:30 am to 10 am at Centennial Hall, Ballroom #3. The free event gives the Juneau community access to live TV coverage of the historic inauguration. Live from Washington, D.C., the inauguration ceremony will begin at

8 am AST. Free coffee will be served courtesy of Heritage Coffee. Event sponsor is the Juneau World Affairs Council. Organizer Claire Richardson says potluck breakfast foods such as coffee cake and fruit would be welcome. To volunteer food or assist at the breakfast, call Claire at 463-5591.



Senior Eyecare Program Provides Eye Care at No Out-Of-Pocket Cost

Three Southeastern Alaskan ophthalmologists in Juneau and Ketchikan are participating in EyeCareAmerica. The program provides no-cost eye care to seniors unable to afford the co-payment cost or with an unmet deductible. The volunteer ophthalmologists accept Medicare and private insurance, waiving the co-payments. If the senior is uninsured, he is seen at no cost.

The Senior Eyecare Program is for people who:

- Are 65 and older, and US citizens or legal residents
- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in 3+ years
- Do not belong to an HMO or the VA

To see if you or the senior you care for is eligible, call anytime **1-800-222-3937**. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Seniors EyeCare is a public service of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc.

Need a Wheelchair Ramp? Grab Bars? Tub Access?

Home modification grants are available to Alaska residents with a special need or disability who require home improvements or devices to assist in daily living. Those with special needs include persons with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia or who are at risk of developing these conditions. Other qualifying conditions include chronic alcoholism, developmental disabilities, mental illness or traumatic head injury. Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries are also eligible for the grants.

Up to \$10,000 for private homes and \$5,000 for rental properties are available for such improvements as wheelchair ramps, tub access, wider doorways, roll-in showers, and grab bars. Home changes which increase mobility or improve home functioning will be considered for eligibility. For information and applications, contact Veronica Hoyle, Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority, at 780-3195 or email vhoyle@thrha.org

THRHA administers the State of Alaska Housing Modification Grant Program in Southeast Alaska. Funds for home modifications are available to all, regardless of ethnicity.

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To share information or make suggestions about newsletter content, contact Mary Halloran at 463-6198 or 1-866-746-3177.

To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email seniorinfo@gci.net or call 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177 (toll free in Alaska).



Are You Taking Care of Yourself?

Feeling irritable? Stopped seeing your friends? Anxious about the future? Just tired all the time? Feeling hopeless? Using alcohol or drugs to relax?

These signs all point to increasing stress which may overwhelm anyone, especially a caregiver. One way to relieve stress is to join others in a family caregiver support group.

- **Family Caregiver Support Group—Juneau**

Meets the second Tuesday of the month at The Bridge Adult Day Center, 1803 Glacier Hwy. Call Mary Lou Spartz at the Senior Information and Caregiver Resource Center: 463-6177. Next Meeting Tuesday, January 13, 7—8 pm

- **Family Caregiver Support Group—Sitka**

Meets at the Pioneer Home Manager's House. Call Brave Heart Volunteers: 747-4600

- **Family Caregiver Support Group—Ketchikan**

Held at the Ketchikan Senior Center. Call Nicole: 225-8080