

Florida Association of Aging Services Providers Newsletter

Volume 1: January/February 2007

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Message from the President

by Yolanda Rodriguez, Project Director, Northwest Focal Point Senior Center, Margate

At a recent board retreat, a friend challenged me to remember FASP's roots and honor its tradition. FASP began as a statewide forum of concerned nutrition providers. And, wouldn't you know, the good fight continues.

Today, the message of the National Center for Nutrition Leadership is:

"The task is large. The mission is vital. The goals are significant. The need is enormous...If we are to be a nation concerned about our elders, we must begin with that which offers nourishment, comfort and life."

The Meals on Wheels Association of America validates this conviction with a single observation: "There is hunger in America not because of a lack of food, but because of a lack of **leadership.**"

I hope you appreciate the simple honesty behind these statements and are empowered by them. Without diminishing the impact or focus on nutrition, I feel these words are applicable to all community-based services. The task of providing services to seniors in Florida is large; our mission vital; our goals significant; and the need enormous. I believe there are unmet needs among our elderly not because of a lack of a strong community-based network, but because of a lack of access.

We need to share this information with state leaders to enact change. No one knows of our frustration when we can't deliver care because so many others dictate who is approved and when services may begin. We need to get the full story out and define all barriers along the way.

In a recent holiday e-mail a friend asked, "What in the world do you think the New Year will bring?" and then noted, "I am very apprehensive." But, I refuse to be daunted, and I hope you share the same belief that our provider network does great work.

Significant change is possible. Governor Charlie Crist recently credited "the willingness of House Speaker Marco Rubio and Senate President Ken Pruitt" to take a stand and pass proposals that would reduce insurance premiums. In the governor's promise to accept nothing less than lower rates for homeowners, he said, "The powerless have now become the powerful, and that's an important and dramatic move." I look forward to the day when the governor refers to our non-profit, aging services network as powerful because we never stop believing that our mission is important and we dare to make dramatic moves.

Count on FASP to foster the necessary conversations. Speak up now and support FASP so we can have a united voice and be heard more clearly. If you have a specific legislative issue, contact your district representative today. Together we can make a significant difference in 2007.

Changing Tides

by Liz Lugo, President/CEO, Mae Volen Senior Center Inc.

Change is difficult. Change is inevitable. Change is good.

We have all heard phrases like these time and time again. This time of year change is a popular subject as people make their New Year's resolutions and set out to make changes in their lives. We also look back on the resolutions made in previous years and do a quick inventory on how many of those resolutions we actually kept. Many of us have spent time

(Changing Tides Cont.)

attending conferences and seminars and reading books and articles on change to help us better prepare for and understand it. We seek to find inspiration and guidance for ourselves and our organizations as we face the future and the changes it will most definitely bring.

This past year my organization, Mae Volen Senior Center, lost the Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) Request for Proposals bid. After 26 years of providing services to seniors as the Lead Agency in southern Palm Beach County, we found ourselves having to turn that grant, and all of the clients we had come to know and love over the years, over to another organization in the community. That was a huge change for us.

I would encourage all organizations to prepare for and think about change—starting now. It is not too late to add it to your list of New Year's resolutions. It is important to at least begin thinking about change and encouraging a culture within your organization that is sensitive to change. Change is difficult. Learn to deal with change in small steps. Do this before you are faced with a huge change that you had not had time to prepare for. It was not easy for us as an organization to lose a grant that had become such an integral part of what we did, but because we had dealt successfully with other, smaller changes over the years we were well-prepared as an organization to deal with a larger one.

It is no secret that we disagree with the outcome of the bid process and that it is currently in litigation. With that being said, the transition to a new Lead Agency did take place and the grant was awarded to the successful bidder. Change is inevitable. It is up to any of us faced with change to make a choice: ride the wave of change, or be engulfed by it. We chose to dust off our surfboards and ride the wave. And what a ride it has been!

The wave of change has brought numerous supporters of Mae Volen out of the woodwork offering to get involved and become a more active part of our organization. The wave has brought with it new opportunities for collaboration and partnerships. The wave brought out the very best in people, from the dedicated staff members who worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition for the clients, to the community volunteer who felt a calling to get involved, to the seniors themselves who flooded my office with calls and letters filled with gratitude and support.

I learned a lot about change this past year. I learned that all of our time spent preparing for and experiencing change over the years was time well-spent. I learned that all I had heard and read about change in the past was true: it is difficult, it is inevitable and, in the end, it is good.

The OAA Reauthorization: What Has Changed

by Margaret Lynn Duggar, using excerpts from Josefina Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging

The Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006 include the principles of the Administration on Aging's Choices for Independence initiative. These principles, which advance the President's New Freedom Initiative, will modernize community-based long-term care systems by empowering consumers to make informed decisions about their care options, giving people greater control over the types of services they receive, creating more opportunities for high-risk individuals to avoid institutional care, and enabling more seniors to live healthy lives in their communities. These principles reflect the core values of the Older Americans Act and that the Act – and the national Aging Services Network - have an integral, necessary role to play in the future of health and long term care in this country. The Act provides new statutory authority the network can use to advance three specific types of changes in our system of care:

The first "system change" empowers consumers to make informed decisions about their care options. To help states and communities address this problem, AoA partnered with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in 2003 to launch the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) Initiative. Under this partnership, AoA is providing federal leadership, financing support and technical assistance to help states and communities re-engineer their systems to make it easier for consumers to learn about and access available care options. The long-range goal is to ensure that all consumers have "visible and trusted sources" they can turn to for reliable and complete information, personalized assistance and streamlined access to the full range of long-term care options. The 2006 OAA embeds the Aging and Disability Resource Center initiative in the Act, directs AoA to promote its implementation in all states, and calls on state and area agencies on aging to ensure that ADRCs are included in state and community-wide long-term care systems change efforts.

The second "systems change" focuses on helping consumers who are at high-risk of nursing home placement -- but not yet eligible for Medicaid - to remain in their own homes and communities through the use of flexible service models, including consumer-directed models of care. The Aging Network is uniquely positioned to reach people before they enter a nursing home by providing services and supports to high-risk individuals while they are still in the community. The Choices approach will help people conserve and extend the use of their own resources, improve the quality of their lives, and save Medicaid dollars. Using flexible service models will increase the capacity of our network, provide more control for consumers, and allow for services to be tailored to the particular needs and circumstances facing vulnerable seniors and their families. The new Act also, for the first time, encourages the network to use consumer-directed models of care,

(OAA Reauthorization..., Cont.)

including the Cash and Counseling model, in responding to the home and community-based care needs of these high-risk individuals, as well as other segments of our elderly population.

The third “system change” Choices for Independence addressed is building evidence-based prevention into our community-based systems of services. The new Act highlights the critical role the network can play in helping seniors to learn about and take advantage of low-cost evidence-based programs that have proven effective in reducing their risk of disease, disability and injury. These programs can empower seniors – through the use of simple tools and behavioral changes - to better manage their chronic conditions, reduce their risk of falling, as well as improve their nutrition and their physical health. What the network needs to do now is systemically increase the capacity of our community providers – our senior centers, meal programs, faith-based organizations, adult day providers and others - to deploy these low-cost science-based programs. This approach builds on the highly successful Evidence-Based Prevention Grants Program AoA launched in 2003 in partnership with the National Institute of Aging, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the John A. Hartford Foundation and others, which was expanded this year in partnership with Atlantic Philanthropies. It gives our network an important role in health that complements the increasing emphasis on prevention under Medicare, and it holds great potential for improving the quality of life for millions of seniors and reducing health care costs.

The modernization of the OAA is an important milestone in our nation's commitment to rebalance long term care for the future and to ensure that the transformation taking place now is responsive to the needs and preferences of people with disabilities, older people and their families.

President Bush Passes the Lifespan Respite Care Act 2006

by MLD&A Staff

As Americans, it is our intrinsic nature to care for our loved ones in their time of need. But oftentimes this goodwill comes at the expense of the caregivers' physical, emotional and financial well-being.

Relief is on the horizon.

On December 21, 2006, President Bush signed the Lifespan Respite Care Act into law. Championed by New York Senator Hillary Clinton (D) and New Jersey Representative Michael Ferguson (R), this new measure authorizes nearly \$300 million over the next five years for state grants to develop programs to help families access quality, affordable respite care. Unlike the National Family Caregiver Support Program which only provided aid for patients and caregivers over 60, the new law allows states to apply for funding to help families regardless of age, income level and condition severity. Specifically, the law authorizes funds for:

- development of state and local lifespan respite programs;
- planned or emergency respite care services;
- training and recruitment of respite care workers and volunteers; and
- caregiver training.

In the United States, caregivers are providing 80% of long-term care, costing families in excess of \$300 billion a year. Even though most families take great joy in providing care to their loved ones so that they can remain at home, the consequences can be devastating. According to Companion Connection Senior Care, a national home-care organization, more than 50% of caregivers report some form of burn out. Respite provides caregivers with occasional relief necessary to sustain their own health, attend to other family members, as well as quality, meaningful experiences for the care recipient.

Not only does this law provide relief for caregiving families, it is a way of saving money in other programs, such as Medicaid. With Medicaid covering more than half of nursing home bills, encouraging home care and delaying institutionalization could save the government big bucks. Everyone wins.

Broward Meals on Wheels to Decrease Meal Delivery

by Peggy Miller, Chief Executive Officer, Broward Meals on Wheels

With the cost of doing business continuing to rise and the funding under the Older American's Act remaining the same, Broward County Meals on Wheels (BMOW) has been forced to reduce our homebound service delivery from a seven day to a five day meal service. The insurance cost, medicine costs, and the overall cost of living here in Broward is also contributing to the funding problem as client contributions have also decreased. We believe we have reduced in every other possible way in an effort NOT to reduce client services. We have spent most of 2006 reorganizing our agency's structure and job responsibilities in order to hire a full time in-house fund raiser for the first time in our history.

(Broward Meals on Wheels..., Cont.)

We have disconnected efforts going on statewide in service provision as well as Strategic Plans by the State. The state is marketing to seniors and retirees to come to Florida, concluding that they will bring with them much needed revenue to the State overall. Statistics still show that about 5% of the current seniors are in need of in-home assistance. If that new retiree money isn't earmarked to help support the social services at least 5% will eventually enroll, then the State is adding to the problem. For Broward County, that 5% translates to about 70,000 seniors. BMOW has the Federal funding to serve about 3500 – only about 0.5 % of the total.

BMOW has NOT had budget CUTS. However, there have been **no increases or cost of living adjustments** to the money we get. I could serve over 9000 people in 2001 with the same money that I am serving 4000 with today. It is simple economics. Yet the State Department of Elder Affairs and the AAA/ADRC's demand more service units.

Overall Statewide, I think the local networking meetings among FASP members is **critical** to getting a better picture of what challenges we face. The challenges can be: Too many providers; Too many different interpretations and enforcement levels of the same rules/regulations; Too many providers struggling to get through today so we are reacting instead of "pro-acting." One thing is clear: It is time to start talking loudly but clear and concise!

News, Events and Links to Resources/Reports

by MLD&A Staff

Senior Center Accreditation. Accreditation is the **official recognition that a senior center is meeting its mission** in a nationally accepted professional fashion. It is based on compliance with nine standards of senior center operations developed by National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC), a unit of NCOA. To find out the benefits and process for accreditation, visit: <http://www.ncoa.org/content.cfm?sectionID=131>

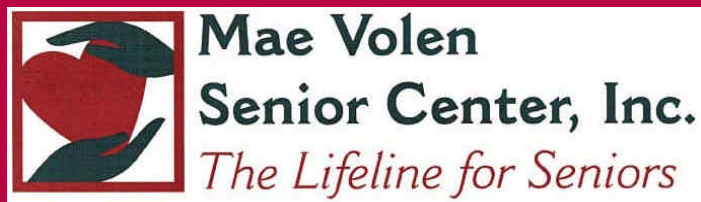
Study Links Heartburn Drug to Hip Fractures. A new risk has been linked to popular drugs used by millions of Americans to treat heartburn. A new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows that certain drugs used to control stomach acid may lead to a higher risk of hip fractures in the elderly. Read the full article at: <http://www.yourlawyer.com/articles/read/12423>

Virtual Meal Technology. A technology consulting company is developing a system called "The Virtual Family Dinner" that would allow families to get together — virtually — as often as they'd like. Experts say such interactions could address a growing problem: elderly people who eat alone often don't eat enough or eat the wrong kinds of food, preventing a host of physical and mental problems that eventually can become life-threatening. Read the full article at: http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2006-12-25-virtual-dinner_x.htm

2007 Florida Conference on Aging: It's all about change. Florida's most preeminent training program in aging is coming to Miami -- August 13-16, 2007 at the InterContinental Hotel. Don't miss the opportunity to take part in this four-day comprehensive program highlighting the substantive changes Florida has to look forward to in 2007. For more information, visit: www.FCOA.org.

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This issue of the FASP e-Newsletter was brought to you by the generous donation of Mae Volen Senior Center, Inc.



Learn more at: <http://www.maevolen.com>

The intent of the FASP Newsletter is to keep you informed about program updates and information relating to aging services providers. If you have any comments about the newsletter, suggestions on ways to improve it and/or items you would like included, please notify Lauren Firestone by e-mail at: lfirestone@mlduggar.com or by phone at: (850) 222-3524.