



# Partners In Care

News from the WPCOG Area Agency on Aging  
Ombudsman and Family Caregiver Programs

Volume I

Spring 2010

**Serving  
Alexander,  
Burke,  
Caldwell,  
And  
Catawba  
Counties**

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## MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

May has been designated by Governor Beverly Eaves Perdue as Older Americans Month. This year's theme - *Age Strong! Life Long!* - acknowledges aging as a lifelong process during which it is never too early or too late to strengthen one's physical, mental, social and financial well-being, or to address disparities among individuals in their opportunities for aging well.



Older Americans are living longer and are more active than ever before. And with the aging of the baby boomer generation - the largest in our nation's history - America's senior population is expected to number 71.5 million by 2030. In Alexander County the population 7,690 is expected to increase 42.51% by 2029. In Burke County the population 19,618 is expected to increase 44.93% by 2029. In Caldwell County the population 17,475 is expected to increase 41.76% by 2029. In Catawba County the population 30,561 is expected to increase 56.22% by 2029.

Governor Beverly Eaves Perdue designated May as Older Americans Month in North Carolina. In preparation for the increasing numbers of older adults, Governor Perdue has issued an Executive Order to ask all State cabinet agencies to assess and strengthen their readiness to serve and work with our aging population.

By Presidential Proclamation, Older Americans Month provides the nation an opportunity to recognize the valuable and often inspirational contributions of older Americans, their families, and aging service providers. Historically, Older Americans Month has been a time to acknowledge the contributions of past and current older persons.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the enactment of the Older Americans Act. This Act supports the nationwide network of state, regional, and local agencies committed to offering services and opportunities for older people and their caregivers. Please contact your local senior center for further information about local services and opportunities.

## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Tuesday, June 15, 2010, will mark the fifth annual observance of "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day." The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse initiated this effort to bring attention to this world-wide, under recognized and under reported problem. No community is immune from its devastating effects. Education and public awareness campaigns are vital for informing people about elder abuse. Raising awareness is a fundamental prevention strategy that not only provides information but also helps to change attitudes and behaviors.

This year's recognition of "Vulnerable and Elder Abuse Awareness Month." The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services is expanding efforts in North Carolina to promote awareness. They are asking individuals, agencies and communities to plan Elder Abuse awareness activities from Mother's Day, May 9, 2010 through Father's Day on June 20, 2010. One simple act is to wear a purple ribbon to bring attention to the issues. You are asked to wear your purple ribbon throughout this time period. The Division of Aging and Adult Services website has a tool kit to aid you in planning and carrying out a variety of activities. We are excited that Governor Perdue has signed a proclamation in observance of these events. Please visit this website to access the tool kit [www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/).

Thank you for your support and any efforts you may undertake to help in the fight against elder abuse.

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### AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM!



**SCAM-JAM** is a collection of educational presentations designed to familiarize consumers with the kinds of scams and frauds in today's society such as Consumer Frauds, Identity Theft and Telemarketing Fraud. Western Piedmont Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging and AARP of North Carolina will be hosting a SCAM-JAM at the following locations:

#### **September 14, 2010**

Morganton-Burke Senior Center from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Caldwell Senior Center from 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

#### **September 22, 2010**

Park Inn Gateway in Hickory from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Alexander Senior Center from 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Guest speakers include representatives from the NC Attorney General's office, NC Secretary of State, Better Business Bureau, NC Department of Insurance and Social Security Administration. In addition, an on-site shred-a-thon will be available to help protect yourself from identity theft by destroying all those old pre-approved credit card offers, bills, and other documents you no longer need that include personal information.

This is a free event and is open to the public of all ages. Advertisements will follow in the near future so be sure to save a seat at one of our upcoming events.

**NORTH CAROLINA OBSERVES VULNERABLE ADULT AND ELDER ABUSE  
AWARENESS MONTH  
MAY 10, 2010 - JUNE 18, 2010**

Each year, more than two million vulnerable and older adults are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Research has shown that older adults who are abused, neglected and exploited are three times more likely to die within ten years than those who are not. According to national statistics, elder abuse is grossly under reported because vulnerable and older adults who are being abused find it very difficult to tell anyone due to shame and fear. Elder Abuse affects men and women of all ethnic backgrounds and social status; it occurs in private residences and in facilities.

In 2009 there were more than 17,000 reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable and older adults made to North Carolina's 100 county departments of social services. Reports are made not only by doctors and other professionals but by family members and concerned citizens in our communities. Anyone who suspects that a vulnerable or older adult is in need of protection is required by North Carolina General Statutes (GS 108A-102) to report this information to the department of social services in the county where the adult resides.

Governor Bev Perdue has proclaimed May 10, 2010 through June 18, 2010 as Vulnerable and Elder Abuse Awareness Month in North Carolina. This time frame ties the awareness period to both the Mother's Day and Father's Day holidays in hopes of reinforcing the spirit of respecting and valuing, not just parents, but all elders.

We all have a responsibility to support the safety, welfare, and dignity of North Carolina's vulnerable and older adults. We urge all citizens to work together to help protect adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It is imperative that North Carolinians refuse to tolerate the indignity of Elder Abuse.

Take an active role in protecting vulnerable and older adults

Speak out - don't ignore this problem - it's not going away. Advocate for the passage of legislation like the Elder Justice Act/Patient Safety and Abuse Prevention Act, that is now law.

Report - suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Adult Protective Services in the North Carolina county where the adult lives. Contact information for County Departments of Social Services is at this website: [www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local)

Volunteer - in local programs that provide assistance and support for vulnerable and older adults in your community and long term care facilities.

Educate - yourself, family, and community about Elder Abuse by visiting the following websites:

Elder Justice Coalition: [www.elderjusticecoalition.com/](http://www.elderjusticecoalition.com/)

National Center on Elder Abuse: [www.ncea.aoa.gov](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov)

National Long Term Care Ombudsman Association: [www.ltombudsman.org](http://www.ltombudsman.org)

North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services: [www.ncdhhs.gov/aging](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging)

**Show the world that you care. Wear something purple to observe  
World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15, 2010.**

## **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES FACT SHEET**

### **National Research Facts**

- ◆ One elderly person is victimized every 2.7 minutes. (National Center on Elder Abuse 2006)
- ◆ Data on elder abuse in domestic settings suggest that only 1 in 14 incidents, excluding incidents of self-neglect, come to the attention of authorities. (Pillemer, Karl, and David Finkelhor. 1988 "The Prevalence of Elder Abuse: A Random Sample Survey.")
- ◆ Older Adults who are abused are 3 times more likely to die within 10 years than those who are not.

### **North Carolina Facts**

- ◆ According to the North Carolina Adult Protective Services Register, 78% of the reports were on adults with disabilities living in their own homes, while about 22% of the reports were on individuals living in long term care facilities.
- ◆ NC's Adult Protective Services (APS) law provides protection to all adults age 18 and older who have a disability and who are abused, neglected or exploited.
- ◆ Older Adults comprise the majority of those receiving APS in North Carolina. Sixty-nine percent were 60 years of age or older. Women comprised 63% of all reports and men 37%.
- ◆ 17.5% of NC's total population is 60 years of age and older.
- ◆ 68% of the reported adults were White, 30% were Black, 1% Native American, and the remaining 1% were Hispanic, Asian and others.
- ◆ North Carolina's APS law requires each of NC's 100 county departments of social services across the state to respond to reports alleging adults with disabilities have been abused, neglected or exploited and are in need of protective services.

### **The Face of Elder Abuse**

- ◆ The public has not embraced elder abuse as a public policy issue. This type of family violence hovers below the nation's consciousness. It lacks a coherent public identity. The elder adult's suffering is often in silence.
- ◆ Women, 80 years of age and older, who live in a domestic setting comprise the majority of Elder Abuse reports.
- ◆ The risk of elder abuse seems to be particularly high when adult children live with the elder adult. These adult children often need their parent's support because of personal problems, such as mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse.

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## **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES FACT SHEET (continued)**

- ◆ Abusers may be dependent on their victims for money, housing, and other forms of support and often isolate them from other family members and friends.
- ◆ Self Neglect accounts for the majority of the cases reported to Adult Protective Services.

### **Some Signs of Abuse**

- ◆ Bruises, black eyes, welts, lacerations, and rope marks
- ◆ Bone fractures, broken bones, skull fractures
- ◆ Open wounds, cuts, punctures, untreated injuries in various stages of healing
- ◆ Broken eyeglasses, physical signs of being subjected to punishment
- ◆ Reports of being hit, slapped, kicked, or mistreated
- ◆ An elder's sudden change in behavior
- ◆ Treats and intimidation causing mental anguish

### **Signs of Exploitation**

- ◆ Stolen ATM, debit, or credit cards by caregivers or family members
- ◆ Signing deeds to real property, loan papers or withdrawals slips through deception or coercion
- ◆ Abuse of Power of Attorney authorization
- ◆ Telemarketing/sweepstake scams
- ◆ Investment fraud

### **Signs of Caretaker Neglect/Self Neglect**

- ◆ Pressure ulcers
- ◆ Unsafe and/or unsanitary living conditions
- ◆ Lack of medical care
- ◆ Malnutrition and/or dehydration
- ◆ Hoarding
- ◆ Poor hygiene
- ◆ Not wearing suitable clothing for the weather
- ◆ Confusion

### **Most Frequently Named Perpetrators**

- ◆ Adult Child
- ◆ Spouse, other relatives
- ◆ Non-relative caretaker
- ◆ Facility staff

For more information contact North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services 919-733-3818

[www.ncdhhs.gov/aging](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging)

Your local Social Services: [www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local)

## CAREGIVING LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN

By Vicki Rackner, M.D.

I love my garden. I care for my garden each day. My garden has taught me important lessons about health, just as my patients have. Often in an “a-ha” moment I can substitute “plant” for “person” and “garden” for “physical, mental, and spiritual health.” Doing this helps me discover something that’s true for me in my life.

Here are some lessons in “people” care that I learned from caring for my garden:

### **Invest in Soil**

Rich soil is a key component to a healthy garden. A rich earth supports life. Adding six inches of mulch to the beds does not feel artistic or inspired. It’s hard work. I do it because I know that this effort will be rewarded with lush, healthy plants.

*Where do you plant yourself? Is your home a nurturing place? Is it clean and organized? How do you feel about the color of the walls? Does your home reflect who you are? Is there anything you can do to help your home feel better to you?*

### **The Right Plant for the Right Spot**

All plants have a condition under which they thrive. Lavender and rosemary do best in dry sunny spots. Rhododendrons do best in shaded, acidic soil. Plants do best when they grow in conditions in which they thrive.

*What conditions do you need to thrive? Are you an introvert who thrives on alone time or an extrovert who is recharged by being around people? Do you thrive on adventure? On a routine you can count on? Do you do best eating three squares a day or having snacks every few hours?*

### **Give the Plants Water and Nutrients According to their Needs**

Plants have varying degrees of drought tolerance. Some need extra nutrients to blossom or fruit.

*Do you drink enough water? By the time you’re thirsty you are already dehydrated. Do you get enough light? Fresh air? Exercise?*

### **Put Plants in a Like-Minded Community**

Plants do best when they are in proximity to other plants whose needs parallel their own.

*What is your community like? You may find that as your life circumstances change so, too, does your community.*

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## CAREGIVING LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN *(continued)*

### **Pull Weeds Regularly, Especially the Invasive Bullies**

I have an aggressive morning glory vine that would take over my whole garden if it were left unchecked. One of my early spring jobs is to pull the roots before they take hold.

*Do you have toxic relationships that smother the healthy projects you love? Do you have qualities that keep you from being the blossoming person you are? A tendency to judge or blame? Once these are removed from your life you have a much better chance of seeing your health and happiness bloom as you wish.*

### **Honor the Life Cycle**

Plants go through cycles in which their energy is invested in preparation for the next season. Annuals live one year in blazing glory then die; deciduous trees lose their leaves in the fall and then miraculously return to life in the spring for many, many cycles.

You, too, need time to recharge. And, like plants, you and I have a finite life. We just don't have a seed package that says how many seasons we will see.

I love my garden. The health of my garden is a result of finding a good match between the condition of my garden and the plants that do well under those conditions. My enjoyment of my garden is a result of finding the right match between what I want and what is.

I hope that you create the conditions in which you blossom, and surround yourself with those who appreciate beauty.

*(Strenghtforcaring.com)*

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## **HELP FOR THE JOURNEY**

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) is a Christian resource for the aging and their families. Through a call center, individual care plans, and web-based technology, NCBAM connects the aging to needed information, resources and services. Call 1-877-506-2226 or visit their website at [www.ncbam.org](http://www.ncbam.org).

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***The capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest meaning and significance.***

~Pablo Casals~

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **PACT (Partners and Caregivers Together) Support Group**

Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the Month at the Morganton-Burke Senior Center - 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm. Call 828-430-4147 to attend.

### **Community Shred Event**

Galaxy Foods on Springs Road in Hickory on Saturday, June 12, 2010 from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Free event!

### **Reverse Mortgage Seminar**

Caldwell Senior Center on July 20, 2010 at 11:00 am. Call 758-2883 to register. Limited registration as lunch will be provided. Free event!

### **Reverse Mortgage Seminar**

Alexander Senior Center on July 28, 2010 at 11:00. Call 632-1717 to register. Limited registration as lunch will be provided. Free event!

### **NC Conference on Aging**

“Building a Livable and Senior Friendly North Carolina”  
Sheraton Imperial Hotel, Research Triangle Park.  
October 13-15, 2010. Call (919) 843-2647 for information.

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