

1941 SOUTH 42ND STREET  
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### STAFF

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Nicole Meyer.....Program Coordinator  
Rachel Schlesselman .....Client Resource  
Coordinator  
Deb Stortvedt.....Administrative  
Assistant  
Linda Houghtaling .....Receptionist

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Deb Daley    Vanessa Warren  
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### HOURS

MONDAY-FRIDAY 8:30-4:30

### OUR MISSION

TO SIMPLIFY THE LIVES OF  
SENIORS BY ENABLING THEM TO  
MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS  
REGARDING THEIR BENEFITS



— VOLUNTEERS —  
ASSISTING SENIORS

VOLUME 1  
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DECEMBER 2009

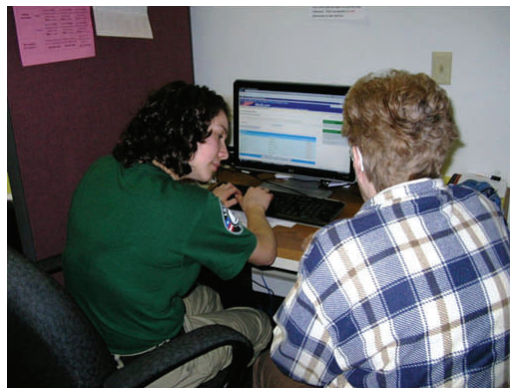
## A Note from AmeriCorps by Camille Abernathy

Greetings Omaha! We, the Oak 6 Fire Team, are special guest writers for this month's newsletter. Some of you may have seen us around the VAS office or at enrollment events in our grey shirts and khaki pants.

That's because for the next five weeks we are volunteering with VAS to help with enrollment for Medicare Part D prescription drug plans. It has been very enjoyable and exciting to come to Omaha. For the majority of our

team, this is our first time in Nebraska. Oak 6 Fire Team is one of 14 teams that make up AmeriCorps NCCC Northern Midwest Region serving 10 of the northern Midwest states. Our home base is located in the town of Vinton, Iowa, 40 miles outside of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We arrived in Vinton on October 14 and were in training until we left November 15 to come and serve VAS. VAS, however, is not the only reason for our visit to Omaha; two

days a week our team volunteers with the Omaha chapter of Habitat for Humanity. It has been refreshing to have a mix of activity, to have wonderful conversations with senior citizens at VAS, and then to



help build homes for low-income families.

During our appointments with senior clients at VAS, we personally meet with senior citizens to see if they could possibly save money by switching their prescription drug coverage. To do this, we find the most beneficial Medicare drug plan for each person by accounting for the prescription medications they use. We have the opportunity to save people hundreds or possibly thousands of dollars by

enrolling them in another plan with more comprehensive coverage for the medications they are taking.

At Habitat, we have been working on installing siding on a new house as well as landscaping and planting grass. We have the opportunity to witness the power of this organization through talking with the new homeowners and learning how much their new house has transformed their life for themselves and their children.

On our days off, we have enjoyed exploring Omaha and have had the opportunity to walk around and dine in the historic Old Market and are looking forward to the opportunity to see the Omaha Zoo. Having our own home and kitchen in Bellevue, we also have been working on our culinary skills through our nightly "family" dinners.

## Holiday Gift Ideas



During the holidays, it is a dilemma to everyone what gift to give and what the receiver will like. A gift of hope and cheer is truly unforgettable and wonderful. Charitable donations made and named for those on your gift list might just be the best gift available! Think of it as the perfect gift that will keep on giving. The costs are within your control, and the rewards are great.

Isn't it better to spend your

money on something that would benefit even more people for a longer time rather than using it to make just one person happy for the season or for a few months? As for your recipients, wouldn't they feel good knowing that they are helping others through your gifts? Remember that people never tire of being altruistic. It gives them a sense of power knowing that they are making a difference, through you!

The joy of the holidays does

not solely depend on the gifts you give during this season. Though gifts are always a delight to open, you can make them even more meaningful, knowing that they reach more than just those you love. Donations as holiday gifts are gifts that endure, gifts that will continue giving even after they have been given away.

This year, consider honoring your loved ones with a donation to Volunteers Assisting Seniors.

*"Sure I'm for helping the elderly. I'm going to be old myself someday. "*

*-Lillian Carter, Jimmy Carter's mother at age 85*

## VAS Wish List

With all of the clients and volunteers coming through the office lately, we have found ourselves a little low on some supplies. Next time you are at the grocery store would you consider picking up a few extra items? VAS is in need of the following: tissues, copy paper, staplers, staples, paper towels, pencils, and a magazine rack or basket for the waiting room.



## Ask the SHIP Experts

**Q:** *Will the Part B premium increase on January 1, 2010?*

**A:** It depends. Most people with Medicare will NOT see their Part B premium increase in 2010. Their Part B premium will stay at \$96.40 per month

because Part B premiums cannot ordinarily increase when Social Security benefits do not increase that year. In 2010, Social Security benefits will not rise.

Some people will have to pay a higher Part B premium in 2010. The Part B premium will increase to \$110.50 per

month next year if an individual's premium is not withheld from their Social Security check or if they recently enrolled in Medicare. The premium will also increase if a single individual's adjusted gross income is above \$85,000 or above \$170,000 for a married couple.



# Health Reform and the Medicare Trust Fund

During the first week in December there has been debate in the Senate over the effect of the health reform legislation on Medicare's finances. Many Medicare beneficiaries fear that the bill will take money away from Medicare, causing a decrease in their benefits. The following excerpt from the most recent Medicare Rights Center's e-newsletter, the *Asclepios*, gives some insight as to how the legislation might affect the Medicare Trust Fund, and in turn, Medicare beneficiaries:

There are three tools Congress can use to extend the life of the trust fund. It can:

Raise revenue, for example, by increasing the payroll tax;

Reduce what Part A will pay out, either by lowering the reimbursement rates to hospitals and other providers, or by eliminating wasteful spending;

Cut benefits, for example, by increasing the deductible for a hospital stay, or by making people with Medicare pay a premium for Part A (most people with at least

10 years of work history get Part A for free).



The Senate health reform bill, The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, takes only the first and second approaches. **The bill does not cut any benefits under Part A or Part B (doctor visits and other outpatient care) or Part D (drug coverage).**

The bill raises the Medicare payroll tax for individuals earning more than \$200,000 and couples earning more than \$250,000. That generates about \$54 billion over ten years. The legislation generates a lot more in savings—over \$200 billion over ten years—by reducing what Part A will pay out, principally by:

Reducing the annual rate of increase that hospitals and other Part A providers receive;

Reducing payments that hospitals receive for providing care to the uninsured;

Reducing wasteful spending on hospital readmissions and care for infections or other conditions acquired in the hospital;

Bringing payments to Medicare private health plans more in line with costs under Original Medicare (subsidies for private plans come from both Part A and Part B).

Altogether, the savings and added revenue extend the life of the trust fund by another five years, strengthening Medicare's financial outlook. No money is taken from the trust fund; the revenues it receives from payroll taxes will continue to pay for care for people with Medicare.

You can read the complete article by visiting [www.medicarerights.org](http://www.medicarerights.org) and clicking on the newsletter tab.

## Annual Appeal Update

Our first annual fundraising appeal campaign launched the first of October with letters to our board members. Since then, we have sent over 380 letters to potential donors. To date, we have received 40

donations totaling \$9,123. On behalf of VAS and the seniors we serve, a heartfelt thanks to everyone who has donated so generously to our fundraising campaign!

## Notes

VAS will be closed on Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday. Also, there will be no January general meeting.

## Volunteers Assisting Seniors

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## Retirees Sharing the Experiences of a Lifetime

# DECEMBER 2009

| Monday   | Tuesday | Wednesday  | Thursday         | Friday  | Saturday  |
|--|---------|--|------------------|---|---|
|  | 1       | 2<br>6-8:30pm<br>Guard/Conservator<br>Class (New Cassel) | 3                | 4   | 5   |
| 7<br>11:45 Conservator<br>Meeting<br>1-3 Holiday Potluck<br>(Countryside Church) | 8       | 9  | 10               | 11  | 12<br><br>HAPPY HANNUKAH |
| 14   | 15      | 16   | 17               | 18<br>11:30-2:30 Ask<br>An Attorney (VAS)   | 19  |
| 21   | 22      | 23   | 24<br>VAS CLOSED | 25<br>VAS CLOSED<br> | 26  |
| 28   | 29      | 30   | 31               |   |   |