

1941 SOUTH 42ND STREET
SUITE 502
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68105

STAFF

Sue FredricksExecutive Director
Nicole Meyer.....Program Coordinator
Rachel SchlesselmanClient Resource
Coordinator
Deb Stortvedt.....Administrative
Assistant
Linda HoughtalingReceptionist

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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 2
EDITION 1

JANUARY 2010

Year in Review by Sue Fredricks

As 2009 draws to a close and we look ahead to the challenges that await us in 2010, I'd like to remember the highlights, the challenges and the changes VAS has experienced in the last twelve months

January and February - As a result of a grant from the Gary and Mary West Foundation, VAS was able to expand our office space and purchase a new computer system which greatly increased our capacity to serve more clients in our office.

March through June - VAS was able to help over 1,700 individuals apply for property tax relief during homestead exemption, resulting in an estimated savings to eligible homeowners of over \$3,000,000.

In April, Pam Roberts left VAS to move to Texas with her husband, Rob. Pam had been with VAS since 2003, starting as a SHIIP volunteer and then becoming a

member of the staff, serving as the Program Manager.



In May, VAS welcomed Nicole Meyer to our staff. Nicole serves as our Program and Volunteer Coordinator. Her primary role is overseeing our Homestead and Legal programs as well as providing volunteer support, recruitment and scheduling.

In June, VAS launched our new Court Auditor program. Ten VAS volunteers have been going to the court house to review the accounting forms that conservators submit annually.

July brought our volunteer appreciation dinner. Rick Scofield was this year's

recipient of the Antonson Award, which is given annually to the outstanding volunteer of the year.

August - VAS established a fundraising committee to develop and implement a plan to diversify our funding sources to help sustain VAS during troubled economic times.

September - Long-time VAS volunteer, Bill Hamilton passed away. Bill served on the VAS board and was honored with many awards for his service to the community, including the VAS Antonson Award and the Humana Starlight Award. He has been greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

October - As a result of the fundraising committee's efforts, VAS embarked on our first annual appeal campaign. To date, 499 letters have been sent and 84 individuals have responded with a donation for a total of \$12,010 raised towards a goal of \$25,000 by June 30th of 2010. (cont. on page 2)



Year in Review (continued from page 1)

We have also received support from the following funders in 2009;

- Giger Foundation
- Hawks Foundation
- La Vista Foundation
- Lincoln Financial Foundation
- Lozier Foundation
- Omaha Community Foundation
- Pacific Life Foundation
- William and Ruth Scott Foundation

Gary & Mary West Foundation
Wilson Foundation

November-December-Medicare Part D-Open Enrollment. Although attendance at enrollment events hasn't been as high as we had expected, we have been extremely busy in the office. With almost 1,500 beneficiaries in Douglas and Sarpy counties losing their Advantage plans in 2010, we are anticipating a very busy

January! To date, through our counseling efforts in 2009, we have saved beneficiaries over \$415,000 in healthcare costs.

As individuals, business and non-profits have all struggled with the troubled economy in 2009, VAS continued to provide our services, resulting in over \$3,400,000 in savings on healthcare costs and property tax relief to senior citizens and disabled individuals living in our community. It was a good year!

"Sure I'm for helping the elderly. I'm going to be old myself someday. "
-Lillian Carter, Jimmy Carter's mother at age 85

Give a Day, Get a Disney Day by Nicole Meyer

"Give a Day. Get a Disney Day." is a program that celebrates and inspires volunteerism.

Disney is working with HandsOn Network to connect volunteers to community need.

Disney is thanking those who volunteer for an eligible volunteer opportunity by



giving them a free ticket good for one day admission to a Walt Disney World® or Disneyland® theme park.

Volunteers Assisting Seniors has been accepted to participate into this program.

If you are interested in earning a free day at a these parks, please stop by Nicole's office to get signed up or visit:
www.DisneyParks.disney.go.com for more information.



Success Stories by Nicole Meyer

It was Gerry Freberg, SHIIP volunteer, who set this year's savings record. While working with a dual-eligible client, Gerry discovered he could save the client a grand total of \$11,194 by switching her

to a new Medicare Part D plan. If the client would have stayed on her 2009 plan, none of her current medications would have been covered.

Great job, Gerry!



New Year, New Medicare by Rachel Schlesselman

In 2008 Congress passed the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act (MIPPA) that will impact how Medicare looks in 2010 significantly. The first thing we will notice is less Medicare Advantage Plans. Secondly, we will see changes in the Low Income Subsidy (LIS) and Medicare Savings Programs (MSP). Thirdly, we will see a change in the standard supplement plans that are offered.

MIPPA created more restrictions and obligations for the Medicare Advantages Plans. Starting in 2011, the Private Fee For Service (PFFS) plans will be required to have a network of providers. Because of these new burdens, many of the companies offering PFFS plans decided to discontinue them beginning in 2010. Coventry and Well Care pulled all of their PFFS plans off the market for 2010. Additionally, Medicare Advantage Plan companies have specific requirements when it comes to the number of different plans they can offer. More specifically the companies are required to make

the plans more diverse, limiting the number of plans each company will offer.

The LIS program has simplified its application by eliminating two questions. The questions regarding life insurance policies and income assistance from others are no longer included. This will hopefully increase the number of people who are eligible for the assistance. Secondly, starting in 2010, once you apply for LIS through Social Security, your application is automatically going to be forwarded to Health and Human Services to start the Medicaid and Medicare Savings Program application. Finally, the asset guidelines for the MSP or QMB program have increased. Previously, the asset or resource limit was \$4,000 for an individual or \$6,000 for a couple. It has now increased to \$6,600 for an individual and \$9,910 for a couple.

The supplement plans will be changing starting June 1, 2010. It has been 18 years since the standardized plans were created.

Since that time, several of the standardized benefits have been included in Original Medicare and therefore do not need to be included in a supplement plan. Once the changes were made to the standardized benefits, several plans looked exactly the same. Starting in June, we will now have 10 standardized supplement plan options instead of 12; four plans went away and two new plans will be sold. For those individuals who have one of the four plans that will no longer be offered, there is no need to worry about their benefits ending, but they are not given a guarantee to change their plan.

The Medicare Advantages books have been updated, as well as some of the other tools we have available. If you have questions or would like some trainings on any of these specific topics let one of the staff know. Thanks for all your hard work with the ever changing Medicare program!



VAS Wish List

VAS is in need of the following: tissues, copy paper, staplers, staples, paper towels, pencils, trash can liners, napkins, and a magazine rack or basket for the waiting room.

Notes

VAS will be closed on Monday, January 18 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Volunteers Assisting Seniors

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 Omaha, NE 68105
 Phone: 402-444-6617
 Fax: 402-546-0886
 E-mail: nmeyer@vie.omhcoxmail.com

Retirees Sharing the Experiences of a Lifetime

JANUARY 2010

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 VAS CLOSED 	2
4	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15 9-12 Ask An Attorney Clinic (VAS)	16
18 VAS CLOSED 	19	20	21	22	23
25	26 3:30 Board Meeting (ENOA)	27	28	29	30