

AASCC's Monthly News and Notes



Independence

August 2014 Issue



AASCC Launches New Program

AASCC is pleased to announce the opening of its Social Security Disability Assistance program. Since the inception of the Aging and Disability Resource Center in 2008, we have become increasingly aware of the difficulties people with disabilities encounter when trying to get their Social Security benefits. Last year in CT 248,000 people applied for disability benefits and 210,000 were denied and had to apply for an appeal to have their cases reconsidered. We have seen how difficult it is for people to go through the appeals process and we want to help people through the process. We are a non-profit organization and are committed to providing help to anyone who feels they were unfairly denied disability. If you've worked the required number of years under Social Security and have a disability we will help you get the benefits you earned. Find more information here at aoascc.org/ssda.

Volunteer Spotlight

Devon Acevedo (VISTA, AARP Experience Corps)

In her application to join the Agency on Aging as an AmeriCorps VISTA with Experience Corps, Devon Acevedo shared that she chose to become a VISTA so that "rather than helping just one individual, [she] could help many more." Over the past year she has done just that by supporting AARP Experience Corps' program and tutors. Devon discovered her passion for improving the quality of education during her senior year of college, where she served as part of a team developing online courses to enable students in Cambodia to enroll and succeed in college.

Experience Corps places teams of older adult tutors in Hamden and New Haven elementary schools to work with students who are struggling as they learn to read. This past school year, Devon's goal was to help improve volunteer recruitment and training. Despite being new to New Haven, Devon quickly familiarized herself to the area and school system, using her research skills and extensive travel experience. Similarly, she sought out a variety of sources to learn about literacy, Experience Corps, older adults, and volunteer recruitment.

With her help, the tutors served 750 students this past year in eleven schools. They have also expanded their community outreach, giving away books at new farmers markets and at food pantry sites in order to reach the most at-need students. While here, Devon also had the opportunity to coordinate our inaugural Volunteer Expo, bringing high-quality volunteer opportunities to older adults in the community who want to give back. In addition, Devon published a monthly newsletter to improve communication and foster a sense of community for Experience Corps tutors. Consistent with her love of learning, Devon sought out funding

In the Community

AASCC provides grants to community organizations through Federal Older Americans Act funding to provide services for individuals 60 years of age or older.

OAA funding provides for "senior cafés", with the goal of reducing hunger and food insecurity, reducing isolation of older adults and promoting health and well-being for participants through access to additional services.

FSW offers cafes at 20 sites throughout greater New Haven and Team, Inc. offers cafes at five sites in the Valley. Services are available to individuals who are age 60 or over and their spouses. There is no income requirement or cost, although a \$3.00 donation is suggested.

Here is a description of two cafes:

In the Valley, the Senior Meal Choice Program provides the opportunity to enjoy a nutritious meal while dining with other café guests in a beautiful restaurant setting at Griffin Hospital. Lunch is offered on Thursdays at 11:45am and dinner on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 5:00pm, thanks to a collaborative dining program coordinated by TEAM, Inc. and Griffin Hospital.

In New Haven, FSW's Senior Café offers nutritious and well balanced lunches every Wednesday at the Greek Olive Restaurant on Sargent Drive in New Haven.

Here are some quotes from some well-satisfied diners:

"I have a good, healthy lunch. If I was home by myself, I would not make such a healthy meal for myself."

opportunities and completed a grant application.

Devon's year of service with the Agency ended in July. True to the mission of VISTA, Devon left behind a program that was enhanced by her work. As for her personal growth, Devon takes with her an ethos for service and greater understanding of the issues young people face when learning to read—and the power of older adults to help meet that need.



To find out more about tutoring children in the New Haven and Hamden schools, contact [Sheila Greenstein](#).

"I enjoy the company of other people at the café. I hate eating alone."

"Very convenient, this is a great service you provide to us seniors."

"I believe it is a good and healthy program for us. We have sociability and a hot meal."

[Click here](#) for more information on the senior cafés located throughout south central Connecticut.

Focusing on Excellence

The Connecticut Home Care Program (CHCP) serves approximately 3,000 adults, assisting them in remaining in their homes, independently, to the greatest extent possible.

A critical piece of our quality program is our client satisfaction survey process. We feel this is a cornerstone in gaining an understanding of how clients feel about both the care management services as well as their direct-care services. The survey helps us understand what is going well and where we need to focus our efforts on improvement. On an annual basis we survey, either by phone or mail survey, 10% of all clients. In addition, all clients new to the program receive a mail survey after three months of participation.

Previous years have demonstrated a high rate of participation in the survey process. Last year, of the 299 respondents, an overwhelming 97% reported that they felt the services received under the Homecare Program helped them remain at home. The results of this survey help us craft our quality initiatives for the coming year.

Caregiver Corner

Vision Loss

Aging often is accompanied by changes in a person's ability to interpret what he or she can see. The most common causes of age-related visual impairment in the elderly are presbyopia, cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Untreated visual impairment leads to physical handicap, increased incidence of falls, social isolation and dependency. Active screening for visual loss in the elderly should be part of the health examination. One in six Americans age 45 or older — representing 16.5 million people reports some form of vision impairment. Sometimes, in younger persons with Alzheimer's disease similar changes occur. People may experience a number of changes in visual abilities. For example, they may lose their ability to comprehend visual images. Although there is nothing physically wrong with their eyes, people with Alzheimer's may no longer be able to interpret accurately what they see because of brain changes. Also, their sense of perception and depth may be altered. These changes can cause safety concerns.

The person for whom you provide care should be evaluated

CHOICES Corner

The cost of living rises but income is fixed. How am I supposed to survive?" Older adults ask this question every day. One thing that can help people survive is SNAP benefits. SNAP is a program designed to help people pay for healthy food. However, there are myths in the popular culture that prevent people from applying for this important benefit. Don't assume that you're not eligible for SNAP and don't believe the myths. Get the facts!

Myth 1	SNAP is only for families with children
Fact	SNAP is for everyone who qualifies, including older adults
Myth 2	I'll only get \$15 a month, it's not worth applying.
Fact	The average benefit for older adults is \$119 per month.
Myth 3	Other people need the help more than I do.
Fact	Everyone who qualifies and enrolls will get the help, you're not taking anything away from someone else.
Myth 4	No stores will take SNAP.
Fact	More than 250,000 stores accept SNAP
Myth 5	It's too hard to apply.
Fact	You can apply online, in-person or by mail.

If you want to apply and need help, or more information, call the CHOICES program (800) 994 9422.

periodically by a physician for any such changes that may be correctable with glasses.

Below are some caregiver tips for reducing vision related problems:

- Create color contrast between floors and walls to help the person see depth. Floor coverings are less visually confusing if they are a solid color.
- Use dishes and placemats in contrasting colors for easier identification.
- Describe the place setting and food arrangement on the plate in terms of a clock face so the person can participate in meal time confidently.
- Mark the edges of steps with brightly colored strips of tape to outline changes in height.
- Place brightly colored signs or simple pictures on doors to important rooms (the bathroom, for example) for easier identification.
- Be aware that a small pet that blends in with the floor or lies in walkways may be a hazard. Your loved one may trip over the pet.
- Control glare by using appropriate window coverings and adjustable lighting.
- Use bold, sans-serif fonts and white or light yellow paper for handouts such as activity calendars and high contrast, tactile signage.
- Provide enlarged, tactile versions of games, eg. playing cards, bingo cards and board games. Such games are available through specialized catalogs.
- When walking with your loved one with vision loss, offer your arm for the person to hold onto.
- Walk about 1/2 step ahead of the person so that you can avoid objects in the pathway.

Did You Know

In 2011, almost one in every 12 seniors above the age of 60 in the United States was food insecure. That represents 4.8 million seniors nationwide, which is more than double the number of food insecure seniors in 2001. *feedingamerica.org*

In addition many older adults are at risk of malnutrition for a variety of reasons including chronic health conditions, poor oral health, changes in sense of taste or smell, depression and isolation.

Poor nutrition is one of the four identified risk-factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes. For older adults malnutrition is also linked to hospital readmissions and can result in poor wound healing and a suppressed immune system.



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