

Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure dignity and independence for Alaska's seniors and to assist them through programs and services, funded by the Commission, to lead useful and meaningful lives.



**Alaskan Seniors:
Living Longer, Growing
Stronger**

is a monthly publication of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). It is produced by Mark Zeiger, Publications Specialist II, Senior and Disabilities Services.

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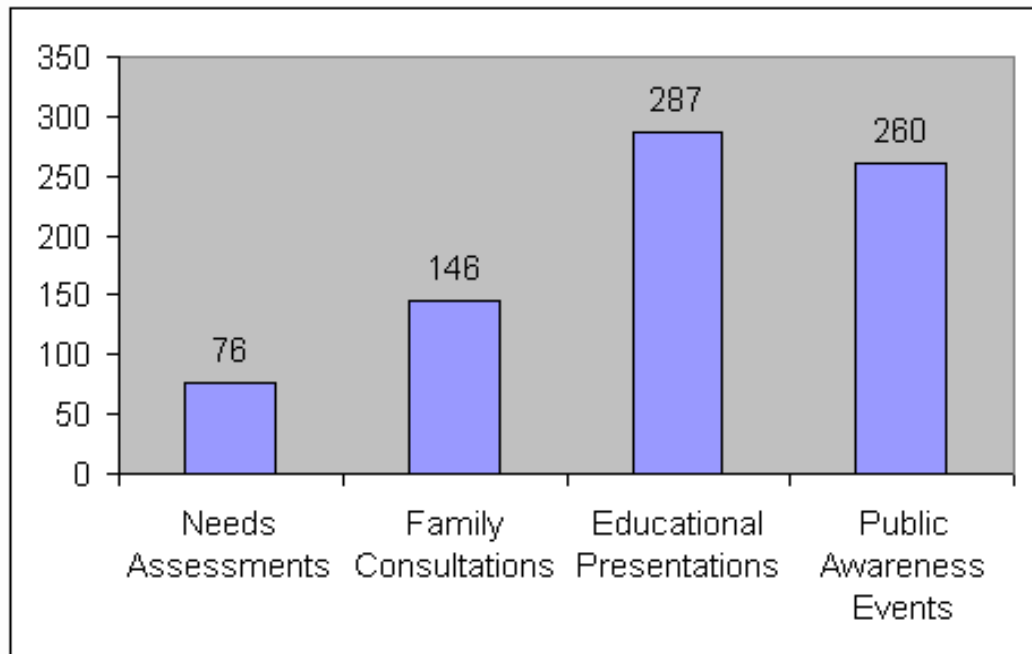
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The graph above represents the number of family needs assessments and family consultations conducted by the Mat-Su Valley outreach specialist of the Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska. It also shows the minimum number of individuals who were reached through educational presentations and public awareness events in FY 03. In FY 04 the project expanded its service area to include the Municipality of Anchorage.

Alzheimer's Resource Agency's Caregiver Access Project Selected for 2004 Healthcare and Aging Award

Amanda Biggs, MSW, Statewide Outreach Coordinator, Alzheimer's Resource Agency of Alaska

The Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska's Caregiver Access Project was selected for the 2004 Healthcare and Aging Awards recognizing innovation and quality, sponsored by the American Society on Aging in collaboration with Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative. The Caregiver Access Project will be honored at the 2004 joint conference of the American Society of Aging and The National Council on the Aging, held April 14-17, 2004, in San Francisco, California.

The Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska is offering the Caregiver Access
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Commission Urges Legislature to Develop Long-Range Financial Plan 90 Million Medicaid cuts endanger health, well-being of Alaska seniors

The Alaska Commission on Aging has issued a press release to Alaska media urging the Legislature to develop a long-range financial plan for the state. “We do not believe the fiscal gap should continue to be addressed entirely by budget cuts,” said Banarsi Lal, Commission Chair.

The DHSS House Finance Subcommittee proposed a fiscal year 2005 budget that would cut an additional \$90 million in total funds for the Medicaid program. This reduction is in addition to the cost containment measures already proposed by the Governor. If such a cut were implemented, it would adversely impact people of all ages including seniors with disabilities and low income. Services that would be eliminated or severely reduced include:

- Dental services
- Speech and hearing therapy
- Eye glasses and other vision services
- Home and community based care
- Access to physicians for Medicaid patients
- Access to prescription drugs for Medicaid patients

Because this cut would endanger the health and well-being of many older Alaskans, the Alaska Commission on Aging encourages the Legislature to develop revenue solutions that consider Permanent Fund earnings and a broad-based tax.

Medicare Changes Explained in New Government Mail Out

Medicare beneficiaries will soon receive a fact sheet and letter from Secretary of Health & Social Services Secretary Thompson to inform them about the new the benefits under the Medicare program, including the Discount Drug Card.

Beneficiaries throughout Region 10, which includes Alaska, should have all received the letter and fact sheet by March 15th.

The fact sheet provides details of the new benefits that you will be able to choose under Medicare. These benefits will be phased in over the next two years. According to the introductory letter from Secretary Thompson, here’s what the new benefits can do for you:

Save You Money on Prescription Drugs

The Medicare-approved drug discount cards become available in June. In 2006, Medicare will offer prescription drug coverage. This voluntary benefit is expected to provide you with prescription drug savings. People with Medicare who have lower incomes can save even more through both the Medicare-approved cards and the prescription drug coverage.

Provide Better Preventive Health Care

Starting in 2005, Medicare will offer new preventive benefits, which will include a “Welcome to Medicare”

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Alzheimer's Project Award (continued from page 1)

Project (CAP) in FY 04 and FY 05 with funding from the National Family Caregiver Support Program through the Division of Senior and Disability Services to identify and support potentially isolated individuals who are providing care for a senior.

The primary goal of the Caregiver Access Project is to enhance families' quality of life and delay out-of-home placement of a loved one for as long as possible through increasing access to information, resources, education and other supportive services. CAP staff conducts extensive outreach to identify caregivers with poor access to information and services in the Southcentral region of Alaska.

Identified caregivers can receive home visits from CAP staff, individualized needs assessments, referral services, telephone and/or on-line support, educational workshops regarding Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and caregiving issues, library resources, and Safe Return Scholarships. Project staff often refers families to other services available in their community, including respite, support group, or personal care attendant services. CAP provides educational trainings for family and professional caregivers and distributes Alzheimer's Resource Kits to provider organizations for both employee education and distribution to families. The Caregiver Access Project increases access to information and utilization of supportive services for families and professional caregivers through innovative and flexible service delivery methods, to enhance the quality of life of Alaskan families across generations.

The Caregiver Access Project was funded by the Mental Health Trust Authority in Fiscal Year (FY) 02 and FY03. The pilot project was conducted in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, the Copper River Basin and the Valdez-Cordova area. In FY 03 Outreach Specialists conducted extensive outreach throughout the targeted region in order to promote the Caregiver Access Project and to reach as many caregivers as possible. In addition to the television advertisements that aired on six networks statewide in July and November of 2002 and in March and June 2003, announcements about CAP services and upcoming workshops aired over the television scanner in CAP communities.

Outreach Specialist Lisa Merrill established many contacts with families and providers through traveling to targeted regions. Personally contacting service providers and physicians increased community awareness of the services available. The Outreach Specialist made 12 trips throughout the CAP region, visiting Glennallen, Kenney Lake, Copper Center, Cordova and Valdez. Services provided include conducting workshops, presentations, and public awareness events, and providing family and provider consultations, information and referral, and supportive services. In addition, several trips were made by car throughout the Copper River Basin area.

Both providers and family members in the region have benefited from the Caregiver Access Project. Suzy Banks, the former Senior Outreach Coordinator in Cordova provided a letter of support for the Caregiver Access Project. She states "This program has enhanced my ability to provide information, support and services immensely. I honestly do not have another resource that can take its place. I have learned a great deal about Alzheimer's through my contact with Lisa (Outreach Specialist), her outreach here and the agency's resource kit given to us. I sincerely hope that this program continues. Speaking for our rural community, I feel that the contacts made, which go beyond an ad promotion or number in the phone book, are vital to access your services."

In FY 04 and FY 05 the Caregiver Access Project not only serves the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Copper River Basin and Cordova-Valdez areas, but also the Municipality of Anchorage. Outreach Specialists are (Concluded on Page 4.)

