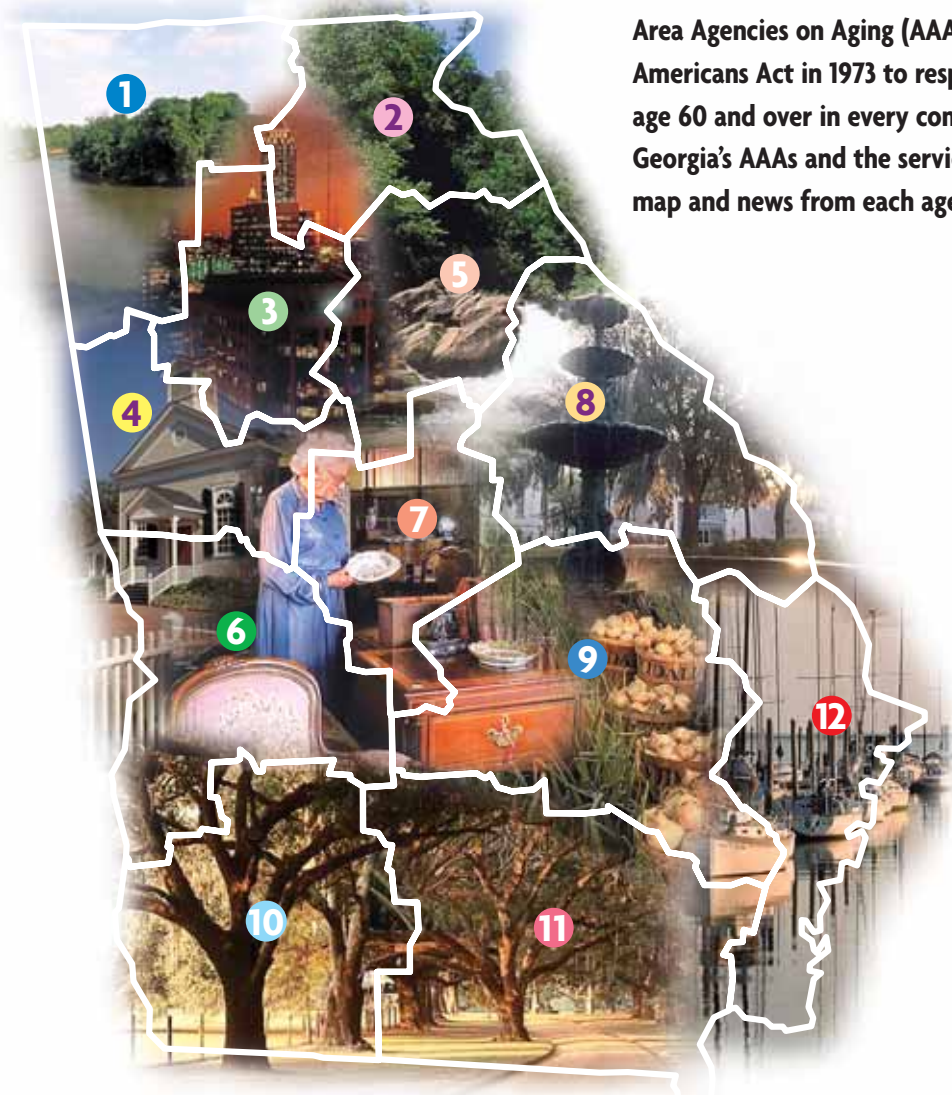


Area Agencies on Aging – Gateways to Community Resources

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) were established under the Older Americans Act in 1973 to respond to the needs of older adults age 60 and over in every community. To read more about each of Georgia's AAAs and the services available, turn to a statewide map and news from each agency, beginning on page 9.

Georgia is divided into 12 AAAs, each serving a different part of the state. They are:

- 1 Northwest Georgia
- 2 Legacy Link
- 3 Atlanta Regional Commission
- 4 Southern Crescent
- 5 Northeast Georgia
- 6 Lower Chattahoochee
- 7 Middle Georgia
- 8 Central Savannah River
- 9 Heart of Georgia Altamaha
- 10 Southwest Georgia
- 11 Southeast Georgia
- 12 Coastal Georgia



Georgia Generations

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For information contact:
Atlanta Regional Commission
Aging Services Division
40 Courtland St., NE, Atlanta, GA 30303
404-463-3239
jkauffman@atlantaregional.com

Editorial Project Development:
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Winner

On the Cover:

Gainesville senior Frankie Hunter has embraced a new lifestyle — focused on proper nutrition and increased exercise — to stay on top of managing her diabetes. Experts estimate that as many as one million Georgians suffer from the disease. For a closer look at this serious condition, turn to page 4.

Cover and feature photography by Ben Brown.

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HOUSEMATE MATCH OF ATLANTA RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Accolades are in order for Housemate Match of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, a homesharing program that matches older homeowners with younger people who are looking for a place to live.

In January, the National Community Development Association (NCDA) recognized Housemate Match with the 2007 Audrey Nelson Community Development Achievement Award.

NCDA, the national advocate and umbrella group for the community development agencies of more than 500 cities across America, established the award in 1987 to recognize exemplary,



innovative programs in the country.

Since its inception in 1984, Housemate Match has linked older adults who have extra room in their homes with compatible younger professionals or students seeking safe and affordable shared living arrangements. A goal of the program is to allow older adults to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. "We feel very honored to receive this award," says Housemate Match Director Rita Zadoff.

"And, of course, we are very proud to assist clients with this type of innovative housing in Fulton County."

For more information on Housemate Match, call 770-578-7526.

Consumer Reports
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Do you want to know more about the prescription drugs you or your family members are taking? Go to Consumer Reports new website www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org to learn more about the cost, effectiveness, and safety of prescription drugs. This Web site is available at no cost to the consumer.



Legally SPEAKING

Statistics consistently show that the vast majority of Scaregiving for elders is provided through informal arrangements with family members providing most caregiving services. Because of these informal/family caregiving arrangements, elders are often able to remain in the community and may never need to enter an institution. However, legal problems can arise in these situations.

One issue relates to the payment or withholding of income taxes for a caregiver. Often caregivers don't charge for their services or are being paid "under the table." Such "under the table" arrangements can create serious problems with the Internal Revenue Service — both for the employer (elder) and for the employee (caregiver). Employers who fail to withhold taxes may be subject to IRS sanctions, and employees who get paid without reporting their income can face problems with the IRS and lose the right to claim their earnings when they go to obtain Social Security benefits. Similar issues can arise through the failure of informal caregivers to have workers compensation insurance coverage, if a caregiver should get injured in the process of their employment.

Courtesy Chalgian & Tripp Law Offices PLLC.

FROM Heart... TO Head



the debilitating disease.

The risk factors they have identified include high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity, which are virtually identical to those associated with heart attack and stroke, according to *Focus on Healthy Aging* newsletter.

Bottom line: Take care of your heart, and you'll be taking care of your brain as well.

Surfing the Net



Each issue of *Georgia Generations* offers several Web sites devoted to caregiving information and resources:

www.shapeup.org raises awareness of obesity as a health issue and provides tips on healthy weight management. You can test yourself on strength, flexibility and aerobic fitness.

www.stroke.org addresses the needs of stroke survivors and their caregivers. It hosts an online support

group and provides links to other sources.

Look for more helpful Web sites in the next issue of *Georgia Generations*.

Protect Medicare and Medicaid Benefits

Report suspected fraud and errors.
Call your Senior Medicare Fraud Project for details and to request a presentation.

Metro Atlanta: 404-463-0763
Outside Metro Atlanta:
GeorgiaCares 1-800-669-8387



MANAGING DIABETES

Exercise and good nutrition are keys to better health.

By Martha Nolan McKenzie

Frankie Hunter discovered that she had diabetes during a routine checkup three years ago. The diagnosis caught her by surprise — after all, she felt fine and had no symptoms suggesting she might have a problem. Yet, Hunter unknowingly did have several risk factors for diabetes — she was 71 at the time, African American, inactive and ate a diet high in carbohydrates.

Hunter began taking an oral medication, and she also attended a series of classes at the Hall County Senior Center in Gainesville. In the classes, which were part of a statewide educational intervention program called Live Healthy Georgia, Seniors Taking Charge, Hunter learned how to count and space carbohydrates, what foods to eat and what foods to avoid and why exercise is critical in managing her disease. So Hunter traded her cakes and muffins for fruits and vegetables and took up a regimen of walking and exercise classes. As a result, her blood glucose levels have fallen, lessening her risk of developing complications from diabetes.

"Most of the time I feel that I am on top of managing the disease, mostly because of everything I learned in that course," says Hunter. "I feel good, and I know I am taking care of my health."

Outcomes such as Hunter's are just what the organizers of Seniors Taking Charge are hoping for. In its second year, the program was created by the Georgia Division of Aging Services, the University of Georgia and the Georgia Area Agencies on Aging in order to educate seniors about diabetes and how to manage the disease through diet and exercise. This year the program has been expanded to include heart disease and fall prevention, but the primary focus remains diabetes management.

Why such a strong focus on diabetes? The numbers tell the story. While death rates of cardiovascular disease and cancer have declined, death rates due to diabetes are on the rise. The problem is particularly worrisome in Georgia — the state has the seventh highest rate in the nation of diabetes among seniors. "Today we have about 800,000 people with diabetes living in Georgia, which is an increase of 20% in the last five years," says Sudha Reddy, chief nutritionist and wellness program director for the Georgia Division of Aging. "Another 200,000-plus people are walking around with diabetes but don't know it. So if you add them up, you're looking at more than one million people in Georgia with the disease."

Seniors bear the brunt of the disease. In Georgia, 17% of the population ages 55 to 64 have diabetes, compared to about 7% of Georgians 35 to 54, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In addition, more than 10% of African Americans in Georgia have diabetes, compared to just over 7% of the Caucasian population. The disease takes a greater toll on blacks as well, resulting in a higher rate of complications and disability.

Devastating disease

Diabetes is a disease characterized by high blood glucose levels as a result of defects in insulin production, insulin action or both. Type 1 diabetes (previously called insulin-dependent or juvenile-onset) occurs when the body's immune system destroys cells in the pancreas, so the body cannot produce insulin at all. Type 2 diabetes (previously called non-insulin-dependent or adult-onset) occurs when the body either becomes insensitive to the insulin it produces or cannot use it properly. It is by far the most common form of diabetes, accounting for 90% to 95% of all cases.

Type 2 diabetes is strongly linked with obesity, physical

inactivity and increasing age — descriptors that can be applied to an ever-growing segment of the American population. “As a nation, we are eating more and exercising less, resulting in an epidemic of obesity,” says Chris Cook, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Georgia’s College of Pharmacy. “We are also an aging population. All these factors directly contribute to the dramatic rise in the rates of diabetes.”

It’s a far more serious disease than many people realize, cutting life short by 10 to 20 years and causing severe complications, including blindness, renal failure, amputation and heart disease. About 80% of diabetics end up dying of heart disease. In fact, the risk for cardiovascular disease is so strong that diabetes is now considered a “cardiovascular equivalent,” meaning if you have diabetes, you are also considered to already have cardiovascular disease, according to “Diabetes in Georgia 2005–2010,” a report published by the Georgia Department of Human Resources.

Dorothy Gosdin, who was diagnosed with diabetes in her mid-50s, knows just how devastating the disease can be. The now 72-year-old Franklin woman lost her mother and husband to heart disease brought on by diabetes. Her current husband suffers from kidney problems due to diabetes, and her son has had two toes amputated.

“I know how bad it is,” says Gosdin. “It affects every organ in your body.”

To protect herself from the devastating complications, Gosdin exercises for 45 minutes 5 days a week. She maintains a strict diet that includes a lot of vegetables and carefully regulated carbohydrates. And she diligently monitors her blood sugar levels and takes her medication. “It’s a lot to keep track of, but I have to do all that because I know what the disease will do to me if I don’t,” says Gosdin.

Diabetes carries a huge financial toll as well. The health care cost for a person with diabetes is approximately \$13,200 per year compared to \$2,600 per year for a person of similar age without diabetes. That adds up to an overall cost in Georgia alone of \$5 billion a year.

Managing diabetes — the challenges

The first line of treatment for diabetes includes diet changes, an exercise program and often an oral medication. If blood sugar levels can’t be controlled with those initial treatments, the patient will be started on insulin. To monitor blood sugar levels, patients prick their finger and test a small drop of blood on a strip at least twice a day.

It’s a complicated disease to manage under the best of circumstances. Just ask Bobby Buchanan. As director of the Southern Crescent AAA, Buchanan has access to a wealth

of information and resources, including a staff dietician. Yet Buchanan recently had to go on insulin when he could no longer manage his blood sugar levels with oral medications.

“When I was first diagnosed five years ago, it was a bit overwhelming,” says Buchanan, 58. “I had to change the way I ate, keep track of my carbohydrates, monitor my levels. And if it felt overwhelming to me, I can only imagine what it would be like for someone who is older, has other medical conditions or has no connections in the community health network.”

Indeed, seniors must contend with additional challenges in



Participants analyze food packaging during a class for seniors at J. Charley Griswell Senior Center in Jonesboro. Led by instructor Marcia Berlin, the class includes nutrition education and exercise.

managing the disease. Living on a fixed income may make it difficult to afford a healthy diet, medical care and medications and supplies. “Medicare, for example, will only pay for 50 testing strips a month, which doesn’t allow the twice-a-day testing that we recommend,” says Peggy Tuten, a certified diabetes educator for the Endocrine and Diabetes Clinic in Brunswick. “And if they have some low blood sugars and have to re-test, they may run out of strips to be able to test even once a day.”

Seniors who no longer drive may have a hard time getting to doctors’ appointments or to the grocery. Arthritis, vision and balance problems can make it hard to get exercise or give themselves injections. And seniors often have other medical conditions for which they take multiple medications, some of which can be at odds with diabetes management. For example, steroids, which are used to treat arthritis or irritable bowel syndrome, cause blood glucose levels to rise. “It’s an extremely complex disease and it takes a lot of time and energy to manage it,” says Cook. “If a patient doesn’t understand everything he needs to do, it can easily get out of control.”

That's why many professionals try to simplify their message as much as possible. "I'd love for everyone to learn to properly count their carbohydrates," says Tuten. "But, especially when someone has first been diagnosed, I start with the 'plate method.' I tell them to use a salad plate instead of a dinner plate. Then divide that plate in half. Fill the top half with vegetables — real vegetables, not starchy ones like corn and English peas. Then divide the bottom half in two, fill half with meat and half with a starch. That's a pretty simple way to reduce portion sizes and ensure a more well-balanced meal."

Advances in drug treatment

If the news about diabetes sounds all doom and gloom, it shouldn't. "There have been tremendous advances in the treatment of diabetes," says Tuten. "It seems like there is something new — and better — coming out every day."

Indeed, several new, more effective, classes of non-insulin drugs have been approved. One, called DPP-4 inhibitors (Januvia and Galvus), targets hormones in the gut to enhance the body's own ability to lower elevated blood sugar. "New research is showing there is more to diabetes than just the pancreas and insulin production, and that is where a lot of the new treatments are going," says Cook. "These drugs work through an entirely

different mechanism, and they give us another gun in our arsenal to keep blood sugars down."

For those who do need insulin, delivery methods have improved markedly. There are disposable pen devices, about the size of a highlighter, which are filled with insulin. The patient just screws on a little needle on the end and dials in a dose and injects — no more drawing up a dose out of a vial into a syringe.

Approximately **21%** of all people age 65 or older have diabetes. Those age 65 and older account for almost **50%** of all cases.

Another insulin doser (Novolin InnoLet) has large, easy-to-read numbers on the dial and audible clicks to help select the correct dose of insulin. The patient simply has to set the dose, insert the needle and press a large push button. "These devices make it so much easier to teach someone how to give themselves insulin," says Tuten.

And researchers are working to eliminate the need for injections altogether. Recently, an inhalant form of insulin (Exubera) was released. Insulin that can be taken orally or in the form of a spray into the back of the mouth are currently in trials.

Statewide community outreach

In the case of diabetes, an ounce of prevention could be worth several pounds of cure. In recognition of this, there are many programs around the state to help seniors keep from getting diabetes in the first place, or, if they already have it, help them manage it well to avoid debilitating complications. "We are beginning to see a shift on the state — and federal — level to a focus on prevention rather than treatment," says the Georgia Division of Aging's Reddy. "That means we are shifting from institutional care to community-based care and outreach programs."

The most comprehensive such program is Live Healthy Georgia, Seniors Taking Charge. The 16-week program, which is offered primarily in senior centers throughout the state, seeks to improve physical activity, nutrition and diabetes self-management skills. The lifestyle changes needed to manage diabetes present a daily challenge, but programs such as this one can help a great deal.

"The seniors at our centers definitely made strides in changing their lifestyle," says Lisa Hale, nutritionist and wellness coordinator for the Southern Crescent AAA. "There is a big psychological component of a diabetes diagnosis. You're faced with having to change the way you do everything. You have to get used to constantly thinking about your blood sugar levels and what you are eating. You have to remember to take your medications. You have to get moving. It can seem like too much, which is why many people aren't as successful in managing their disease as they should be. But being in a program like Seniors Taking Charge gives them constant reinforcement. It shows them that this is something we can do together, as a group, to avoid the horrible complications of diabetes."

These shoes were made for walking

Exercise is a crucial component of managing diabetes, and walking is one of the best forms of exercise there is. Walking can be done almost anywhere; it doesn't require expensive equipment or gym memberships and almost anyone can do it.

As beneficial as walking is, diabetics should proceed with caution. That's because one of the complications of the disease is neuropathy — nerve damage that can interfere with a person's ability to feel pain. In addition, poor blood flow can make your foot less able to fight infection and to heal. "A small blister can turn into a major wound," says Chris Cook, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Georgia's College of Pharmacy. "It can even lead to amputation."

So before you start a walking program, be sure to consult your physician. It might be a good idea to ask him or her to recommend a podiatrist or someone who can help you select safe, quality walking shoes. It's critical that your shoes fit properly without rubbing against any part of your foot when you walk. They should have ample cushioning, and heels no higher than three-quarters of an inch. A double layer of socks can also help prevent blisters — a thin "undersock" made of a material that wicks moisture away from the skin and a thicker "outersock" with extra padding under the heel and ball of the foot.

Be sure to check your feet after walking to make sure no blisters or "hot spots" are developing.

Now you're ready to walk. Happy trails!



Overall, the 800-plus seniors in Georgia who participated in the program last year showed significant improvement — lowering their blood sugar levels and reducing their risks for complications. These positive results encouraged the program's organizers to expand its scope this year.

"The first year we focus heavily on diet — eating more fruits and vegetables," says Elizabeth Speer, a graduate student at University of Georgia and a nutrition educator with Seniors Taking Charge. "This year we are placing more emphasis on physical activity. A lot of times seniors reach a point where they think they shouldn't be doing physical activity because they could hurt themselves. Actually, it's just the opposite. Physical activity is probably the most beneficial thing they can do. It contributes immensely to diabetes self-management, but people just don't do as much as they should."

That's particularly true among seniors, who did not grow up in the same gym-membership, jogging culture of their children and grandchildren. For many, the idea of starting an exercise regimen is as foreign as the notion of taking up Web page design or text messaging their friends. Yet, exercise helps diabetics on many levels. It helps reduce weight, which in turn reduces the strain on nearly every organ in the body. While you are exercising, the physical activity helps to burn off the glucose in your blood. And even while you are not, any lean muscle you build through exercise and light strength training makes your body more efficient in using insulin.

"It doesn't take much to make a difference," says Cook. "You don't have to go out and start running marathons. Walking 20 minutes a day three times a week can help a lot. And you

In 2004, diabetes was the **7TH LEADING** cause of death in the state, killing **1,622 Georgians**, the equivalent of **more than 31 DEATHS** every week.

don't have to have a model's body. Just losing 5 to 10 pounds can significantly influence a person's blood pressure, lipid levels and blood sugar levels."

While Seniors Taking Charge is perhaps the most comprehensive diabetes prevention intervention in the state, it is hardly alone. In Brunswick and Kingsland, for example, the Glenn County Health Department offers diabetes education classes once a month that are open to the public. In addition, the Coastal Medical Access Project (CMAP), a free medical clinic run by volunteer physicians, has begun to offer a series of six classes for patients diagnosed or at risk for diabetes. The classes, which are offered in both Glynn and Camden counties, cover nutrition, exercise, medications and complications. "Both of these initiatives grew out of a great need in our area," says Pat Mobley, health promotion coordinator for the Coastal Health District. "Since diabetes is a

chronic condition that affects so many of our residents, the more people are educated on how to take care of it, the better. It's a daily challenge, but we know if people can keep their blood sugars tightly controlled, they can prevent complications."

In the middle-western part of the state, the Southern Crescent AAA is teaming up with Prevent Blindness Georgia to offer vision screenings in an effort to prevent one of the devastating complications of diabetes — blindness.

Risks and Symptoms

Watch for these signs:

- Frequent urination
- Intense thirst
- Extreme hunger
- Tiredness
- Blurred vision
- Irritability
- Unexplained weight loss or gain
- Prone to get repeated infections
- Delayed wound healing
- Tingling and numbness in hands or feet

Risk factors for developing Type 2 diabetes

- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Advancing age
- Family history of diabetes
- Hispanic, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander or American Indian
- Past history of gestational diabetes
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Pre-diabetes

And in the Atlanta area, seniors who complete the Seniors Taking Charge initiative will be encouraged to enroll in a new program, Living Well. "This is a chronic disease self-management program which we have just been licensed by Stanford University to implement," says Mary Byrd, health and wellness coordinator with the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Subjects covered in the six-week Living Well course include: 1) techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation, 2) appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility and endurance, 3) appropriate use of medications, 4) communicating effectively with family, friends and health professionals, 5) nutrition, and 6) how to evaluate new treatments. "Basically, it teaches people how to manage their conditions, so they will have fewer hospital and doctor visits."

All these programs have one message in common. "You can change and you can improve your condition," says Noaleen Ingalsbe, wellness coordinator and registered dietitian for the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center. "Even small lifestyle changes can, over time, make a big difference. You can prevent diabetes, or, if you already have it, you can improve your condition."

As proof, Ingalsbe points to Mary Rackley. Diagnosed seven years ago with diabetes, Rackley went on oral medications and adjusted her diet immediately. She also began walking. "There is this big 'ole room in the (Dallas Senior) center, and we just go in there and walk. I walk with people. I walk by myself. At first, I couldn't walk that long, but I worked up to where I walk a mile and a half pretty much every day."

As a result, Rackley lost 37 pounds and was able to go off her diabetes medication.

"My body is God's temple," says Rackley, 65. "I want it to be as good as it can be." **GG**

GeorgiaCares Reaches Out to Seniors



By Abby Griffis, LMSW, Division of Aging Services,
GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning Coordinator

The GeorgiaCares program, administered through the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Aging Services, is making great strides in reaching Georgia's senior, disabled and soon-to- retire populations. Composed of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), Prescription Assistance Initiative, SMP and the Lifelong Planning Program, GeorgiaCares provides community education, counseling and information about Medicare and other health insurance; Medicare Supplemental Insurance; prescription assistance programs; long-term care services and financing options; and health care rights and protection.

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2006, 5,756,606 individuals were reached through GeorgiaCares community events, one-on-one counseling sessions and media events.

The GeorgiaCares SHIP has been diligent in informing Medicare beneficiaries about their health care coverage, and educating and enrolling beneficiaries in Medicare's new prescription drug benefit, Part D. Special efforts have been aimed at seniors who qualify for extra help in paying for their Medicare prescription drug coverage. Recently the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the elimination of the 2007 late enrollment penalty for any beneficiary eligible for the low-income subsidy for a Part D plan, even if the beneficiary failed to sign up by the program's initial deadline. GeorgiaCares SHIP will conduct extensive outreach throughout SFY 2007 to target individuals who may qualify for assistance with their prescriptions.

Georgia's SMP is committed to spreading the message of "Don't Be a Target of Health Care Fraud." In 2007, in an effort to

unify and strengthen fraud prevention in the health care industry, the U.S. Administration on Aging renamed all Senior Medicare Patrol projects simply "SMP." Although this changes the name of the GeorgiaCares Senior Medicare Patrol, the project will continue to empower seniors to prevent health care fraud, particularly among the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

The GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning Program is working to help midlife and older consumers prepare holistically for a range of future needs and expenses — from living independently at home to maximizing choices in facility-based long-term care. In late 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) selected Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska,

The GeorgiaCares Lifelong Planning Program is helping midlife and older consumers prepare for a range of future needs and expenses — from living independently at home to maximizing choices in facility-based long-term care.

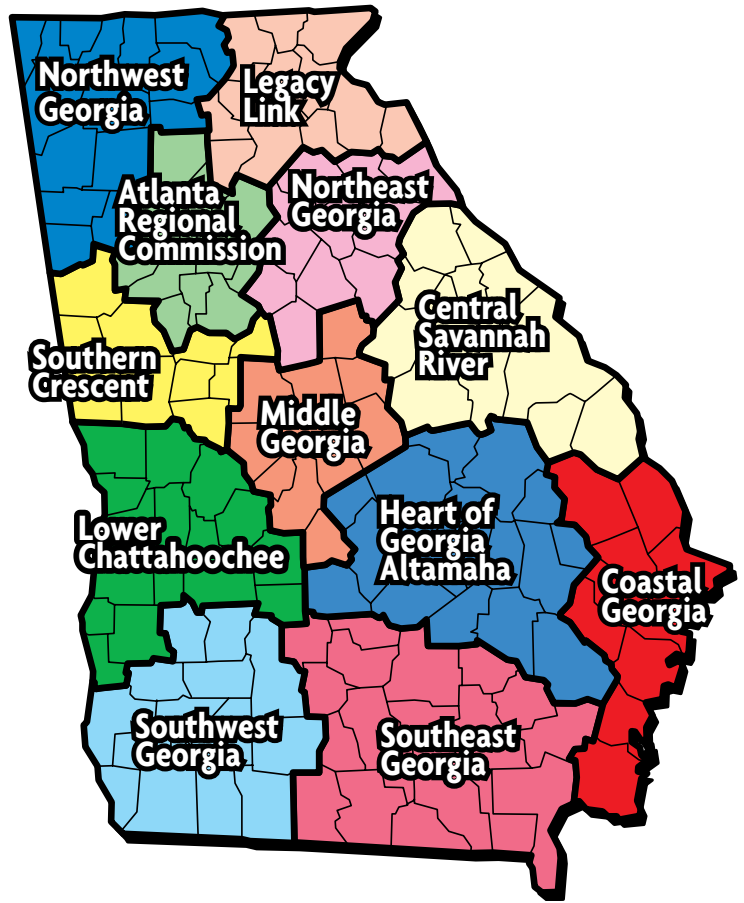
South Dakota and Texas to participate in round three of HHS' "Own Your Future" campaign, an aggressive education and outreach effort designed to promote long-term care planning.

Consumers may request the national Own Your Future Long-Term Care Planning Kit by calling 1-866-PLAN-LTC (1-866-752-6582) or by logging onto www.aoa.gov/ownyourfuture (also available for downloading). "Own Your Future" is coordinated nationally by three components of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; and the Administration on Aging (AoA).

For more information about GeorgiaCares, contact your local Area Agency on Aging by calling 1-800-669-8387. **CG**

A Look at Area Agencies on Aging Around Georgia

In communities across the country, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) serve as gateways to local resources, planning efforts and services that help older adults remain independent. On the following pages are the programs and services offered by Georgia's AAAs.



Northwest Georgia

Covers a 15-county area surrounding Rome, Dallas, Dalton, Cartersville

Adult day care offers respite for caregivers

One of the problems facing caregivers is the need to find substitute care for the times when they need a break. Caregivers have needs themselves, such as medical appointments, hair appointments or errands to run, or perhaps they just need a "breather." In-home and site-managed care is available in most areas. Some facilities also furnish overnight or temporary respite to allow the caregiver to take "mini" vacations.

If the client is ambulatory, Adult Day Care can meet this need for a daytime solution. Day care services may include a healthy meal or two, feeding assistance, therapies, special diets and incontinence help for individuals with dementia, developmental disabilities, spinal cord injury or



Respite care can make a big difference in the well-being of caregivers.

traumatic brain injury. The service can be provided for a few hours or eight hours a day. Close supervision guarantees the safety of the clients, and an in-house activity director plans mental stimulation.

Several programs offer Adult Day Care programs through the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). They include: Community Care Services Program, Home and Community Based Services, Alzheimer's funding and Veterans Affairs. The eligibility and cost vary for each program and range from subsidized care to private pay programs.

The AAA has listings of private pay sources, in which the client and agency work out an agreement between them. If you would like to know more about these services, call the Area Agency on Aging that covers your county.

For other information, contact the AAA of Northwest Georgia, P.O. Box 1793, Rome, GA 30162-1793; 706-802-5506 or toll-free 1-800-759-2963.

NORTHWEST GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker, Whitfield

Atlanta Regional Commission

Covers a 10-county area surrounding Atlanta

What is a NORC?

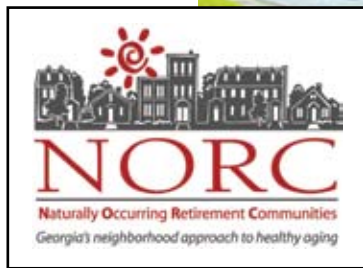
Just what is a NORC? It stands for Naturally Occurring Retirement Community. A NORC is a community where a higher-than-usual density of older adults live. It can be a small city, a neighborhood or even a high-rise building.

NORCs help older adults remain independent and stay in their own homes and communities by providing services and programs that support them as they age in place. The services and initiatives of each NORC site are different, depending on the needs of that particular community.

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the lead agency for the NORCs in East Point and the Marian Road High Rise. The East Point NORC started in 2004 when ARC and the Fulton County Council on Aging conducted a door-to-door survey of 150 isolated older adults. Among their responses, these seniors indicated

that they wanted to improve their health, meet their neighbors and feel safer in their neighborhoods. This led to the Senior Walking Club initiative, where 20 seniors have been walking regularly since April. They have made lifelong friends walking

with their new neighbors. East Point police and firefighters who join them have helped the seniors realize that their neighborhoods are safe places. Their blood



pressure has gone down, and they have even lost some unwanted pounds!

At the Marian Road High Rise NORC, there are 282 residents who speak 5 different languages. In an effort to promote resident relationships across cultures, a "Cultural Story Day" event was a huge success, where 30 residents shared their

life stories and pictures. The stories were written in English as well as in Chinese, Korean, Russian and Spanish. They were displayed on poster boards in an art gallery-like setting, and this "gallery" of stories and pictures allowed residents to gain a better appreciation of their neighbors.

Both the East Point NORC and the Marian Road High Rise NORC are part of a four-year pilot project, ARC's Aging Atlanta, funded in part through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2004–2008). The project partnerships include the Atlanta Housing Authority, the Jewish Federation, Piedmont Hospital and the Visiting Nurse Health System.

There are NORCs all over the country. Currently there are five official NORC sites in Georgia, and four of those NORCs are in the Atlanta area. The Georgia NORCs are the East Point NORC, Marian Road High Rise NORC, Meyer Balseer NORC, Savannah NORC and Toco Hills NORC.

For more information about NORCs, contact Myra Dickinson, program manager at ARC's Aging Atlanta Project. Call 404-463-3213 or email Myra at mdickinson@atlantaregional.com.

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Rockdale



Atlanta Regional Commission, 404-463-3333
www.agewiseconnection.com

If you need caregiving information, contact an AgeWise Connection partner:

Cherokee County Cherokee County Senior Services, 770-345-5312

Clayton County Clayton County Aging Program, 770-603-4050

Cobb County Cobb Senior Services, 770-528-5364

DeKalb County Office of Senior Affairs, 404-322-2950

Douglas County Douglas Senior Services, 770-489-3100

Fayette County Fayette Senior Services, 770-461-0813

Fulton County Fulton County Aging Program, 404-730-6000

Gwinnett County Gwinnett County Senior Services, 678-377-4150

Henry County Henry County Senior Services, 770-898-7670

Rockdale County Rockdale County Senior Services, 770-922-4633

Northeast Georgia

Covers a 12-county area surrounding Athens, Winder, Monroe, Covington, Madison

Athens Area Golden Games: Who says games are just for kids?

The Athens Area Golden Games has planned its seventh weeklong event from April 30–May 5, 2007, to celebrate the active lifestyle of older adults and encourage non-active people to get started. The games provide adults age 55 and older an opportunity to participate in a variety of sporting events and to prepare for the Georgia State Golden Olympics.



The games are organized by a coalition of agencies who are committed to the health and well-being of older adults in our community.

Some favorite events will be back again this year, including tennis, golf, swimming, bowling and the 5K run/walk. We've also added a few new events, including Scrabble, fishing tournaments and a free-throw contest at the "fun events" area. We'd really like to see these new events be successful. Come play with us.

For more information, contact Anne Hansen at the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging at 706-369-5650 or



Athens area seniors "show their stuff" at the annual Golden Games.

Leslie Trier at Clarke County Leisure Services at 706-613-3625.

NORTHEAST GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES:

Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Walton

Lower Chattahoochee

Covers a 16-county area surrounding Columbus, Americus, Butler, Montezuma, Cuthbert

Happy feet for diabetics

Recently the Lower Chattahoochee AAAA had the opportunity to provide foot care to 46 seniors in three different senior centers. The screening was presented as a component of the "Live Healthy Georgia" diabetes education program and study, which touched on all aspects of diabetes. It even supplied foot mirrors so



that diabetics can inspect the soles of their feet. Loss of feeling is a major component leading to undetected injuries and, in the worst-case scenario, amputation. Our clients learned to always wear shoes, inside and outside of the house. The loss of feeling can be so great that diabetics can step on sharp objects such as a nail and never know it. If not recognized and treated quickly, this injury can lead to serious infections. It is critical for diabetics to check their feet daily for injuries or bruising.

As part of the program, participants had the opportunity

to "show off" their feet and test their knowledge during one-on-one counseling sessions with a certified registered nurse. She examined feet for any abnormalities and loss of sensation. Foot care included nail clipping, filing and removal of calluses, foot massage with soothing oils and helpful educational tips. Even the shoes got inspected. The nurse answered many questions, and all participants left stating that their feet "never felt that good before." All participants promised to continue good foot care.

For further information, contact the Lower Chattahoochee AAAA, P.O. Box 1908, Columbus, GA 31902-1908; 706-256-2900 or toll-free 1-800-615-4379.

LOWER CHATTAHOOCHEE ENCOMPASSES THESE

COUNTIES: Chattahoochee, Clay, Crisp, Dooley, Harris, Macon, Marion, Muscogee, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Webster

Heart of Georgia Altamaha

Covers a 17-county area surrounding Baxley, Dublin, Vidalia, Jesup, Swainsboro

Jesup Healthcare enjoys “snow” for the holidays

Jesup Healthcare Center celebrated the holidays in style beginning on December 12, with the lighting of the grounds. Residents and 800-plus community participants enjoyed a variety of activities, including a manufactured snowstorm. To the delight of the nursing home residents and their caregivers, hundreds of children came to play.

Participants included Santa, children’s choirs singing carols, local teens and



“Now tell me: What do you want for Christmas?” asked Santa.

other vocal talents from the community. Young dancers, twirlers and gymnasts performed to everyone’s delight. Residents who were unable to come outside were visited by children and adults who shared Christmas cards, candy and love.

“What better gift could we have given to the community, residents and caregivers than to see children’s happy

smiling faces?” says Chris Purser, nursing home administrator. “Everyone in attendance was given wonderful memories

about the day the snow blizzard hit Jesup Healthcare.”

Wayne County Transit offered free transportation for residents from other local nursing homes. Several public and private partners planned the event: the City of Jesup, Hands on Wayne and Jesup Healthcare. Funding for the event was provided by a grant from the Altamaha River Partnership and donations from Comcast Cable, Wayne County Housing Authority, civic clubs, Heart of Georgia Altamaha Area Agency on Aging and many others.

For further information, contact Heart of Georgia Altamaha RDC, 331 W. Parker St., Baxley, GA 31513; 912-367-3648 or toll-free 1-888-367-9913.

HEART OF GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES:

Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, Wilcox

Southeast Georgia

Covers an 18-county area surrounding Waycross, Valdosta, Tifton, Douglas, Folkston

Southeast Georgia CCSP partners with Pfizer

Diversified Resources, Inc., the Community Care Services Program (CCSP) care coordination agency for the Southeast Georgia AAA region, recently partnered with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and area physicians to provide disease management information to clients in Southeast Georgia in an effort to improve health outcomes.

The “Healthy at Heart” project will help participants better understand and manage their health conditions by providing and reinforcing disease-related information. The project includes individuals with heart disease and diabetes, as well as those at high risk of heart disease.

Pfizer agreed to provide, at no cost,



patient education materials; reminder calendars and notices to help participants remember to keep medical appointments; diet information; charts to help clients track their cholesterol levels; medication planners; and fanny packs to carry medication and snacks. Also, Pfizer agreed to provide a statistical analysis of the project’s results to measure its effectiveness.

The 12-month project is not restricted to only those who use Pfizer drugs. The patients’ physicians will continue the existing medication regime and standard of care. Also, the doctors will provide routine lab results as they monitor the patients’ cholesterol levels. Care coordinators will contact participants monthly to discuss the patient information and to provide encouragement for healthy choices. A successful project will result in lowered cholesterol levels for participants.

For more information, call the Southeast Georgia AAA at 1725 South Georgia Parkway West, Waycross, GA 31503; 912-285-6097 or toll-free 1-888-732-4464.

SOUTHEAST GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES:

Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, Ware.

Legacy Link

Covers a 13-county area surrounding Gainesville, Cumming, Clarkesville, Toccoa, Hiawassee

Senior volunteers honored at Gainesville luncheon

Legacy Link honored several hundred senior volunteers at a luncheon in Gainesville recently. These volunteers have shared their time and talents by volunteering in many ways to help their communities in the region. Legacy Link's Retired Senior & Volunteer Program (RSVP) offers seniors age 55-plus opportunities to stay involved in their communities while providing help at no charge to local agencies.

One RSVP volunteer recognized for special service was Kathleen Fitts of Lumpkin County. Mrs. Fitts earned her recognition for having donated more than 1,900 hours of volunteer time in the past year.

The RSVP volunteers donated

more than 53,000 hours of volunteer service in the region during the last fiscal year. Some individuals worked in school classrooms, some in senior centers, others in sheriff's offices and others in hospitals. The program is offering appealing



volunteer opportunities to baby boomers and other older adults with substantial job skills who retire and want to remain involved in the community.

The Volunteer Recognition Luncheon Event was sponsored in part by United Community Bank. Bank employees provided a variety of delightful entertainment, furnished many door prizes and even helped serve lunch. Legacy Link is pleased to have a partner in the region to help provide such an event for deserving senior volunteers.

For information, contact Legacy Link, P.O. Box 2534, Gainesville, GA 30503-2534; 770-538-2650 or toll-free 1-800-845-LINK.

LEGACY LINK ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White

Southern Crescent

Covers a 10-county area surrounding Franklin, Newnan, LaGrange, Griffin, Carrollton

Wellness program addresses diabetes

Diabetes is a metabolic disorder best characterized by hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar. If not diagnosed and properly treated with medication and lifestyle changes, the effects of diabetes can be crippling, even deadly.

In Georgia, the disease is growing rapidly among all age groups, especially the senior population. According to the 2003 Georgia Diabetes Report, more than 600,000 Georgians have diabetes. That is more than 10 percent of the entire Georgia population.

In response to these findings, District Four Health Services is emphasizing diabetes as part of the Southern Crescent Area Agency on Aging's Wellness Program. This focus on diabetes includes Hemoglobin



A1c pre/post testing, written pre-tests to measure base knowledge and post-tests to determine improvement in knowledge about diabetes. A walking program with competition among the participants is also part of the program. The walking program is part of the Live Healthy GA Campaign. Participants are required to have their

physician fill out a release form in order to participate.

Due to the success of this program, which was conducted in four senior centers, the same program is now being implemented in two more senior centers and will be completed by May 2007. We anticipate significant improvements in knowledge and Hemoglobin A1c percentages again this year. The diabetes intervention program will continue to expand until each senior center has implemented it.

For additional information, contact the Southern Crescent AAA, P.O. Box 1600, Franklin, GA 30217-1600; 706-675-6721, 770-854-6026 or toll-free 1-866-854-5652.

SOUTHERN CRESCENT ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Butts, Carroll, Coweta, Heard, Lamar, Meriwether, Pike, Spalding, Troup, Upson

Middle Georgia

Covers an 11-county area surrounding Macon, Warner Robins, Milledgeville

Christmas dreams come true for Middle Georgia children

The Kinship Care/Relatives as Parents Program of the Middle Georgia RDC/Area Agency on Aging, along with the local Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, made Christmas dreams come true for local Middle Georgia children.

The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November, and December each year and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in a particular community where the campaign is conducted. The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a shiny new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to youngsters that will motivate them to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and commu-

nity leaders.

Three young Middle Georgia boys, ages 7, 9, and 16, received that hope this past Christmas, with a gift of toys at an estimated value of \$150. The Area Agency on Aging appreciates Marine Toys for Tots for this generous donation to one of our Kinship Care families.

The Kinship Care/Relatives as Parents Program educates and provides a support



Natalie Brown, caregiver specialist (right), and the boys' great-aunt (left) gathered around a tree of toys given by the Toys for Tots Foundation.

system for caregivers. It connects grandparents/relatives to resources and information, which increases their awareness of issues that affect their households on a daily basis. The program provides assistance with accessing community resources, grandparents' rights and other legal services, financial issues, parenting concerns, and relative caregiver support groups.

For more information on the Kinship Care/Relatives as Parents Program in Middle Georgia, call Natalie Brown at 478-751-6509.

MIDDLE GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, Wilkinson.

Central Savannah River

Covers a 14-county area surrounding Augusta, Thomson, Martinez/Evans, Waynesboro, Sandersville

Intergenerational partnership assists grandparents raising grandchildren

Bikes, toys, bedding, kitchen supplies and furniture crowd the usually bare conference room at the Central Savannah River Area Regional Development Center (CSRA RDC). At the suggestion of Jeanette Cummings, Area Agency on Aging director and Communities in Schools board member, RDC employees are working with the "stay in school" network to

help grandparents raising grandchildren.

One of the grandmothers, Mrs. W., is 65 years old and raising her two granddaughters. The girls' mother is bedbound due to complications from multiple sclerosis. Partners from the CSRA Regional Development Center and Walton Options for Independent Living provided Christmas gifts for the entire family. Mrs. W. fought back tears as she commented that this year has been particularly difficult. She beamed with pride for her granddaughters, who are both honor students.

Andy Crosson, executive director of CSRA RDC, and Wallace White, Lifelong Planning coordinator, deliver a couch to a grandparent's home.

The older granddaughter writes for a local newspaper.

Mary Crawford, director of Communities in Schools of Augusta-Richmond County, states, "We believe that kids will prosper when surrounded by a caring community and working alongside caring adults." The Area Agency on Aging, a program of the CSRA Regional Development Center, hopes to foster such caring communities by reaching out to grandparents raising grandchildren and families caring for individuals with disabilities, and connecting them with community resources.

For more information, please contact the Area Agency on Aging at 706-210-2000, 1-888-669-8387 or www.areaagencyonaging.com.

CENTRAL SAVANNAH RIVER ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES: Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington, Wilkes.



Southwest Georgia

Covers a 14-county area surrounding Albany, Bainbridge, Moultrie, Thomasville

Caregiver role doesn't hold back caregiver

Caregivers are very busy people as they balance looking after the needs of their loved ones, managing their households and caring for their own needs. Those who work on top of other obligations really have their hands full. How about a caregiver who is going to college and creating a better future for herself?

Shonder Jackson has a dream that the Family Caregiver Program and In-Home Respite programs of SOWEGA Council on Aging have been able to help come true. Ms. Jackson cares for her mother, who requires constant supervision and care due to her medical condition. At the same time, Ms. Jackson has pursued her college education with all the extra requirements to attend classes and study while living



The graduate and caregiver, Shonder Jackson, with her mother, Hessie L. Jackson.

on a tight budget. Respite services have allowed her to leave her mother to attend her school activities.

On December 13, 2006, at the age of 36, Shonder Jackson completed the first stage of her dream as she graduated from Darton College with an associate's

degree in psychology. She is already enrolled in Troy State University, with the ultimate goal of earning a bachelor's degree in psychology clearly in view. The Family Caregiver Program of SOWEGA COA is pleased to be able to help this tenacious lady who is making her mother proud.

For further information, contact the Southwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging at 1105 Palmyra Road, Albany, GA 31701-2508; 229-432-1124 or toll-free 1-800-282-6612.

SOUTHWEST GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES:

Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, Worth.210

Coastal Georgia

Covers a 9-county area surrounding Brunswick and Savannah

Grandparents raising grandchildren: Building effective collaborations in Coastal Georgia

Currently in the U.S. there are more than 4.5 million grandparents who are responsible for raising their grandchildren. In Coastal Georgia there are almost 9,000 families headed by a grandparent who provides the primary care for one or more grandchildren. For seniors on fixed incomes and perhaps experiencing their own issues related to aging, raising a family for the second time presents enormous challenges.

In November 2006, AARP-Georgia, the Coastal CARE-NET and the Area Agency



There are almost 9,000 grandparent-headed households in Coastal Georgia.

on Aging convened a summit to address issues impacting grandparents raising grandchildren in the region. This was the third in a series of summits sponsored by AARP and local organizations in the state of Georgia. The purpose of this daylong event was to share information, discuss the issues facing "grandfamilies" in the region and develop a plan of action to

address those issues. The summit was held in Savannah, where more than 50 guests attended.

Following presentations and a panel discussion, attendees met in small groups and were charged with a specific problem to address. Grandparents had an opportunity to express their fears and concerns to professionals and other community leaders. Many grandparents stated that the summit gave them hope and reduced their apprehensions about rearing their grandchildren.

An action plan calling for ongoing collaboration was developed, and follow-up sessions will be convened in early 2007. A resource guide for grandparents has been developed and is available free of charge from the AAA.

For further information, contact the Coastal Georgia Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-580-6860.

COASTAL GEORGIA ENCOMPASSES THESE COUNTIES:

Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh.

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Georgia Council on Aging

The Georgia Council on Aging advocates on behalf of older Georgians and their families. For more information, please visit the Web site at www.gcoa.org



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Pfizer

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