



Boston Seniority

Elderly Commission

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor of Boston

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Table of Contents:

Page Number

| | | |
|----|-------|------------------------------|
| 3 | | Mayor's Spotlight |
| 4 | | White Cane Awareness Month |
| 6 | | RSVP Volunteer Opportunities |
| 8 | | SCP Volunteer Highlight |
| 16 | | Healthy, Wealthy & Wyse |
| 18 | | Healthy Recipes |
| 20 | | Don't Retire, Inspire |



Check out our NEW and improved website
www.cityofboston.gov/elderly

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Mayor's Spotlight



Mayor Menino Reminds Elderly Residents:

“If it’s too nice, think twice”

Elderly Commission launches consumer protection campaign to educate residents on scams targeting elderly

Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the City of Boston’s Commission on Affairs of the Elderly launched a campaign aimed at educating and protecting the elderly from consumer scams and fraud. The announcement was made with a group of seniors at the Roche Community Center, where the Mayor and Attorney General Martha Coakley gathered to hear firsthand accounts from elderly residents who have been targeted by scammers. The City of Boston’s Elderly Commission will partner with the Mayor’s Office of Consumer Affairs and Licensing, the Attorney General’s Office, the State Consumer Affairs Office, amongst others, to educate the elderly in Boston on how to protect themselves against scams.

“Every year, thousands of seniors are targeted for scams ranging from financial fraud, to housing and health related frauds,” Mayor Menino said. “It is important that we work together to provide our residents with the resources and information they need to protect themselves from scammers who would prey on vulnerable seniors.”

Under the direction of the Mayor, the

Elderly Commission is working with partnering agencies to create the consumer protection campaign. The campaign will focus primarily on identity theft, predatory lending, misleading contracts, and healthcare fraud. Many of those who fall victim to such scams end up facing serious issues including billing disputes, debt collection, loss of property, and undisclosed medical charges. The initiative will provide Boston senior citizens with information to protect themselves against fraud and where to seek assistance should they fall victim to scams.

“We thank Mayor Menino for raising awareness about this important issue,” said AG Coakley. “Our office hears from seniors across the state who have been victims of financial and other scams, and those scams typically increase during tough economic times. It’s why it’s so important that seniors have the tools and information they need to be an educated consumer.”

The Consumer Protection campaign kicked off with a forum to present information on the challenges, rights and responsibilities of the elderly in dealing with consumer protection issues. The educational campaign will then include an informational brochure based on the issues raised by the elderly at the forum. The Elderly Commission will also host training seminars and community discussions hosted by Elderly Commission.

OCTOBER IS WHITE CANE AWARENESS MONTH



The white cane is a symbol of independence and blindness. The white cane allows a legally blind person to travel independently. In 1931, the Lions Club began promoting the use of white canes for people who are blind as a national identification program.

International **White Cane Day** is **October 15**. All states and many other counties have White Cane laws, which allow pedestrians, who are legally blind, the right of way at street crossings. Most people who are legally blind have some usable vision.

- When in doubt, ask if the person needs assistance.

- Do not grab the person, cane or dog guide!
- Do not pet a dog guide. Most dog guides are working & should not be petted since it can be distracting for the dog.

Massachusetts White Cane Law states that All motorists, when they see a pedestrian who uses a dog guide or white cane at a street crossing, **must come to a complete stop.**

There are a variety of white canes depending on a person's visual impairment, age, height and specific needs.

The two main types of white canes used by legally blind persons are: **WHITE SUPPORT CANE** with red at the bottom, which is designed to identify the person as legally blind but has usable travel vision and is used to assist with depth perception on stairs or curbs. And/or: **LONG WHITE CANE** with red at the bottom. This cane is for independent travel and to avoid obstacles.

Specialized training for both types of canes and travel skills are provided by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

These canes may be rigid or collapsible. They are used to help navigate the area ahead of the user. The long cane allows a person who is blind or visually impaired to check for objects in the path of travel and changes in the walkway surface.

A small percentage of persons who are legally blind use a dog guide rather than a long cane but usually need long cane and orientation & mobility training before acceptance to a dog guide school.

Legal Blindness does not mean total blindness. Most persons who are legally blind have some usable vision. Some may be able to still read (regular

or large print), recognized faces and colors (or not), depending on the type of vision impairment and degree of vision loss. Vision may also change throughout the day depending on the time of day, health of person, lighting of area, etc.

White Cane Awareness Month is to promote better understanding of what a white cane means & how pedestrians and motorists can assist long cane users and dog guide users at street crossings.

For more information on White Cane Awareness Month or for white cane training, contact the Orientation & Mobility Department at the Mass. Commission for the Blind, 800-392-6450(V/TTY) x7581.



Basketball



Seniors over age 60 who are interested in playing Basketball are welcome to join us every Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Roslindale Community Ctr, 6 Cummings Hwy. You can just shoot around or you can participate in 3 on 3 Half Court games.

For more information call Ed Conway at (617)327-6831 or e-mail him at edconway14@yahoo.com



RSVP Boston

Volunteer Opportunities

Boston RSVP has an array of volunteer opportunities to choose from. Call us today to receive an informational packet on the RSVP Program, a volunteer opportunities booklet, and directions on how to sign up for the program. Take the time, make the call, help out in your community!

For more information on the RSVP Program or to sign up, please call Anique Langlois, RSVP Administrative Assistant at 617-635-3988

Generations Incorporated

Make a difference in a child's life by building a strong mentor relationship while improving children's literacy! As a Generations Incorporated volunteer, you will utilize your life experience in literacy programs that inspire students and improve schools in: Dorchester, East Boston, Roxbury, South Boston, and the South End.

While the focus of our programs is improving children's literacy, Generations Incorporated is about more than just reading. Both you and the child will grow. You will see verifiable results while also participating in a larger movement called Experience Corps.

Tenacity

Tenacity, an urban youth and tennis program, is currently looking for Tenacity Buddies! Tenacity Buddies will work with

small groups of students, reading aloud to them, guiding conversations about what our students are reading, and helping students with projects. Our students are in middle school and range in age from 11 – 14 years old.

Boston Partners in Education

Boston Partners in Education has been mentoring public school students on the frontline for over 40 years. We match struggling K-12 students with volunteer academic mentors who provide students with the skills they need to graduate, the self-esteem they need to succeed, and tools and guidance to achieve their dreams. Become a volunteer academic mentor and make a difference in the life of a child in your community. All it takes is one hour of your time per week.

Citizen Schools

Through the demonstration of Citizen School's powerful impact and partnerships with out-of-school advocates, they are at the forefront of a movement to transform the learning day and improve the educational trajectories of young people in Boston. Volunteers are needed to provide one-on-one and small group homework tutoring in all subjects to 6th and 7th graders in Brighton, Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, Roslindale, and South Boston.

Volunteer Opportunities

At One Of Boston's Premier Historic Sites

Castle Island Association

~ 617 268-8870 ~

www.bostonfortindependence.com

The Elderly Commission Seniors are you eligible?

Food Stamp requirements have changed for most senior applications.

The Department of Transitional Assistance no longer counts -

- * savings or retirement accounts
- * your car
- * your home
- * or other assets

For more information or to complete an application contact:

Lorna Pleas at 617-635-4335

Don't Retire, Inspire! Hosted by Augusta Alban

Tune in to find out how Boston seniors are INSPIRED everyday and listen to them share their wisdom with you.

Check out BNN channel 9 on Fridays at 2:30 p.m. and repeated on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m.

On Boston City TV, Comcast channel A-24 and RCN channel 16, Tuesday and Saturday at 5:00 p.m.

Collaboration between Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Elderly Commission & Suffolk University

Senior Count

BNN-TV Channel 9

Boston Seniors Count

Cable Television Show

Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

Repeated Sunday at 11:30 a.m.

and Tuesday at 8:30 p.m.

For more information call

Deputy Commissioner

Tula Mahl, Producer

at 617-635-1922



SCP Volunteer Highlight

Dorothy Scott

By: Eileen O'Connor



Dorothy Scott was born and raised in Georgia and came to Boston when she was 17. She stated that she “Loves Boston”. Dorothy is a woman of many hats, each time you see her she has a different hat on. Dorothy has been a Senior Companion for almost 11 years. Ms. Scott has a special client Ms. K who is now 96 years young and lives by herself in Roslindale. Dorothy stated that she enjoys visiting Ms. K and visits her every Monday to listen to old stories from when food used to be rationed. If not sitting or listening they will on occasion go shopping and up until recently Ms. K would pick up every penny she would see on the ground. Dorothy and Ms. K would be seen in Stop & Shop, Shaw’s or Walgreen’s doing the little shopping that she does. Since Ms. K’s eyesight has been failing lately Dorothy assists her with her mail by opening and reading it to her.

When Dorothy is not with Ms. K and her other client she is with her oldest grandson who is 27 and has a disability. She takes him shopping and assists him with his household needs; she has raised him since he was an infant. Dorothy has 5 children, 3 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren, recently she ran a birthday for one of her great-grandchildren at her house and LOVED every bit of it. She

loves spending her spare time with all of her grand and great-grandchildren and being on the computer. Before becoming a Senior Companion she worked as a home health aide, volunteering at the Food Pantry at the Elm Hill Headstart. I asked her what motivated her to become a Senior Companion and she said, “Helping people it makes you feel good about yourself”. I asked Alex Freeman her supervisor at Ethos about Dorothy and he stated: “Dorothy is one of the most dependable volunteers that I have. She rarely takes time off and she makes sure to complete her shopping tasks in all kinds of weather. Dorothy never complains – even about the most demanding clients that have alienated other volunteers. The role that Dorothy plays in her client’s lives is significant – providing weekly opportunities for fresh groceries, but also a warm, caring contact. Dorothy really demonstrates that volunteering is more than just completing a task; indeed, it’s the personal connection between volunteer and client that has the most significant impact.”

Ethos is a non-profit organization; promoting independence, dignity and well-being among the elderly and disabled through quality, affordable and culturally-appropriated home and community based care. The organization Ethos is affiliated with the Senior Companion Program at the Commission on Affairs of the Elderly, Boston City Hall, which matches Senior Companions with the elderly who have difficulty completing tasks. The Senior Companion Director is Gloria Rice-Stuart, (617) 635-3987. Contact Alex Freeman at (617) 522-6700 or at afreeman@ethocare.org for additional information.

On Thursday, September 1st, Ethos held a Fall Kickoff Luncheon as part of their AgeWell West Roxbury program. In celebration of Labor Day, this luncheon recognized the past, present and future work of our senior population. The luncheon highlighted AgeWell West Roxbury's many programs, including courses, workshops and events designed to keep seniors active.



Alex Freeman, Ethos Volunteer Services Program Manager, also formally recognized the agency's 10 Senior Companions, who are examples of seniors who are active and engaged in their community. Last year alone, the Ethos Senior Companion Corps spent 5,671.75 hours in direct service to elderly clients. Ethos' Senior Companions are: Mark Clougherty, Maria Diaz, Sarah Friendly, Helen Harris, Betty Greene, Bernice McNamee, Dorothy Robinson, Dorothy Scott, Myrtle Smith, and Mildred Wright. If you are interested in volunteering with Ethos, contact Alex Freeman, Volunteer Services Program Manager: afreeman@ethocare.org, 617-522-6700 x 323.



Information on New Legislation Protecting Cars, Bank Accounts, & Wages from Debt Collectors

Submitted by Michele A. Gauger, Attorney
Fellow, Greater Boston Legal Services
Elder, Health & Disability Unit

This article aims to educate readers about new Massachusetts legislation recently signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick that increases consumer protection against creditors' debt collection practices. This legislation officially takes effect on April 7, 2011. This article will highlight the major changes in consumer personal property exemptions ushered in by the new law, and how these specifically apply to senior citizens.

I. When Creditors Can Reach Your Assets

If a debtor has an unpaid debt, in some situations her creditor can reach her assets to satisfy the debt. For example, if the debtor placed some of her property as collateral for the loan or debt, her creditor can recover possession of the property if the debtor defaults on the debt. In limited circumstances, a creditor can obtain an order from the court that allows the creditor to seize a debtor's property, a process known as attachment. An attachment order can be granted by the court pre-

judgment, prior to the court hearing the actual merits of a creditor's case against a debtor. However, this option is available only where a creditor can show that a situation meets all of the following conditions: (1) the creditor has a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits of the case; (2) the creditor is reasonably likely to win a judgment equal to or greater than the value of the property it is seeking to attach; AND (3) the creditor is likely to have difficulty collecting on the debt if the property is not seized immediately, such as where the debtor cannot be served with a lawsuit or where there is a high likelihood that the debtor will dispose of the property.

But most of the time, when a creditor wants to reach a debtor's assets, the creditor must obtain a judgment from the court. To do so, after a debtor defaults the creditor first files a lawsuit against the debtor. If the creditor wins the lawsuit, the creditor receives a judgment and becomes a judgment creditor. The debtor is now required by court order to pay the creditor. If the debtor fails to do so, the creditor can obtain a writ of execution from the court. With this writ of execution, the creditor can then request that the local sheriff levy, or collect, specific property belonging to the debtor in order to satisfy the outstanding debt. Reaching a debtor's assets in this manner is the

subject of Governor Patrick's recently-passed legislation.

II. What Assets Creditors Can Reach

Under Massachusetts law, certain assets belonging to a debtor are exempt from seizing by judgment creditors. The purpose of these exemptions is to allow creditors to collect unpaid debts and judgments while ensuring that the debtor retains enough assets and money to live. Until recently, the law protecting these assets was extremely outdated and did not achieve this purpose. For example, the old law only exempted cars worth less than \$750 and protected a mere \$200 for monthly rent and \$75 for monthly utility payments. The old law also did not contain a catch-all exemption category for other unspecified personal property. Because of these deficiencies, Massachusetts debtors were sometimes left stranded and without any ability to pay their expenses.

The amended law, which will go into effect on April 7, 2011, generally raises the maximum value of exempt property in a number of categories. It further raises the exemption value of an automobile for debtors who are either over 60 years old or disabled. Under the new law, these are the major categories of property exempt from seizure by a judgment creditor:

- Funds necessary to pay for monthly utilities, up to \$500
- Funds necessary to pay for monthly rent, up to \$2,500
- Household furniture, up to \$15,000 in value
- Bibles and books, up to \$500 in value
- Tools necessary for the debtor's trade or business, up to \$5,000 in value
- Materials and stock used in debtor's trade or business, up to \$5,000 in value
- One sewing machine, one computer and one television, up to \$300 in resale value for each
- Cash savings, up to \$2,500
- Wages equal to the greater of (a) 85% of debtor's gross wages OR (b) 50x the federal or Massachusetts (whichever is larger) minimum hourly wage
- Full amount owing or paid to the debtor as public assistance
- One automobile necessary for personal transportation or employment, up to \$7,500 in value (* raised to

\$15,000 in value for debtors over 60 years old or disabled)

- Jewelry, up to \$1,225 in value
- Catch-all exemption of any aggregate interest in personal property up to \$1,000 plus up to \$5,000 of any unused portion of exemptions for household furniture, business tools and automobile

In addition to the exemptions above, Governor Patrick's new legislation provides that where a creditor

brings suit against a debtor who has defaulted on a debt, the proceedings will be dismissed if the debtor is either over 60 years old or disabled and has no non-exempt property or income.

For more information on the impact of the new consumer protection law, contact the Elder, Health & Disability Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services by phone at 617-603-1577 or at our offices located at 197 Friend Street, Boston, MA 02114.



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Actual view of property

Information you should know about the 2011- 2012 Winter Flu Vaccine

1. There is NO vaccine shortage; nationally, manufacturers are producing more vaccine than ever before. What is different is the amount that the state is supplying to be used free of charge.

2. Most seniors have Medicare, and there should be no problem with their getting vaccine, and often there isn't even a co-pay. Seniors should contact their primary care provider about vaccine. Or they can check a pharmacy. In some instances, the pharmacy will just accept the insurance and there shouldn't be a co-pay.

got a cough?



cover it.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sneeze or cough into your upper sleeve.
For more information, go to www.bphc.org/flu.

Building a Healthy Boston



Mayor Thomas M. Menino

¿Tiene tos?



Cúbrase.

Cúbrase la nariz y la boca con un pañuelo desechable o estornude o tosa en la manga de su blusa o camisa.

Para más información, visite www.bphc.org/flu.



Construyendo un Boston más saludable
Alcalde Thomas M. Menino

Lifelong Learning Program for Adults 50+ is Thriving in Boston and South Shore

The lifelong learning program for people 50+ at UMass Boston is known as “OLLI”—that’s short for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Now able to boast more than 1,000 members from a broad spectrum of Eastern Massachusetts towns including many on the South Shore, OLLI now offers approximately 70 non-credit courses per semester. Sponsored by UMass Boston’s Gerontology Institute, OLLI was established in 1999 and has since successfully attracted older learners to its educational courses, lectures, social events, and travel opportunities. While many offerings take place on the beautiful harbor front campus, there are also courses offered at two satellite locations—the Hingham Public Library and Cordage Park in Plymouth.

A small sampling of the courses to be offered over the 2011-2012 academic year includes Intermediate French Conversation through Cinema; How Our Brain Works; Introduction to Opera; Longevity and Medical Thought (an online course); Writing Stories and Memoirs; Learn Chinese Modern History through Documentary Movies; Culinary Italy from North to South; Getting to Know Your Digital Camera; and National Issues Forum: Non-Partisan Discussions of International Relations and Security Issues. Most courses meet one morning or afternoon a week for an hour and a half for 5-6 weeks. In addition, attendees may bring a bag lunch to a multitude of mid-day “Brown Bag”

presentations, offered almost daily on a wide variety of topics.

Many courses are taught by retired or current UMass Boston faculty, and others by retired specialists in their fields. Mid-day Brown Bag presentations feature speakers from many fields of knowledge. In addition, OLLI arranges group discounts for theatrical performances at locations such as the Huntington Theatre, Lyric Stage Company of Boston, and the Boston Center for the Arts; group discounts are also arranged for domestic and international travel. The exciting daytrips and longer travels add an important element of social and cultural interaction that many adults find to be both vital and necessary in life after retirement.

OLLI’s annual membership of \$175 compares favorably to similar programs costing \$500-\$700. OLLI students also receive benefits such as a UMass Boston student ID card, which makes possible free admission or access to the following: JFK Library/Museum (general exhibitions only); Museum of Fine Arts (general galleries only); UMass Boston Athletics Facilities, including the swimming pool and Fitness Center; computer labs on UMass Boston campus; a student email account for life; and the omission of the meals tax (5%) on food purchased in the cafeterias on campus.

The Fall 2011 semester begins in early September and the Spring 2012 term begins in mid-March. For more information or to see the fall programs, visit www.lli.umb.edu or call 617-287-7312. Full or partial scholarships are available upon request.

Abdominal pain: Appendicitis?

Abdominal pain is caused for many different reasons: gastric ulcers, cancer, gas, constipation, etc. Abdominal pain can be acute, chronic, diffuse, intermittent, excruciating, annoying, starting at one area then moving to another.

Never ignore abdominal pain. It can be serious and sometimes deadly if not treated. Everyone has heard of appendicitis. What causes it? Where is the appendix located? Is it serious?

The appendix is a small, tube-like organ that is attached to the colon which is the first part of the large intestine. The appendix is located in the lower right area of the abdomen. It has no known function!! A blockage inside the appendix causes appendicitis. The blockage leads to increased pressure, problems with blood flow and inflammation. If the blockage is not treated, the appendix can break open and leak infection into the body (peritonitis).

Symptoms:

Each case is different. Not everyone has all of these symptoms.

- Pain and/or swelling in the lower right abdomen-worse when touched,
- Soreness above the belly button that may extend to the lower right belly; coughing, sneezing, moving around or

taking a deep breath makes the pain worse

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Inability to pass gas
- Low grade fever
- Abdominal swelling

Most cases are in people ages 10-30.

Remember:

Appendicitis is a medical emergency. If you suspect that someone has appendicitis, immediately call your doctor who will refer you to an emergency room for further evaluation and treatment. The doctor may say, call 911 for an ambulance if necessary. Eat or drink nothing until the doctor evaluates the patient to rule out other abdominal diseases.

Surgery is almost always performed ASAP. There may be an incision on the right side of the abdomen and/or an exploratory laparotomy or maybe a less invasive laparoscopy where the doctor does small incisions, inserting a camera and does the surgery by looking at a camera.

The patient will be in the hospital for a few days. If the appendix has ruptured, the patient will stay a few days more, often on antibiotics and medications to reduce infection and pain. Recuperating at home will be for a few weeks or more. The patient can resume his/her regular routine after 4-6 weeks.

Continued from page 16

Appendectomies are a very common operation in the United States. There are 750,000 appendectomies done yearly in the United States.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

A very Happy 2011 to all my relatives, friends and patients who are Breast Cancer survivors.

To those who are in treatment today, I wish you a speedy treatment and a fast recovery.

For those who have not had a mammogram this year, please call your doctor for an appointment today.

Need a Ride?

Senior Shuttle 617-635-3000

Scheduling Available

Monday - Friday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Please give at least 3 days advanced notice. Priority is given to seniors scheduling rides for medical appointments. (Some restrictions may apply)

Discounted TAXI COUPONS

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- Buy 2 books each month -

Call 617-635-4366 to find a location near you.



Boston Fire Department Elderly Fire Safety Program

FREE

Photo Electric Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Detector available for owner occupied single family homes/condos

Restrictions Apply



For more information please call Ernie Deeb at 617-635-2359. You can also view our website online at www.cityofboston.gov/fire or visit the Boston Fire Department on Facebook.

Healthy Recipes

Roasted Okra

Ingredients:

- 1 pound okra
- Salt to taste
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Fresh thyme leaves to taste (optional)
- Freshly ground pepper

Preparations:

1. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Rinse the okra, and drain on a kitchen towel. The okra should be dry. Trim away the stem ends and the tips, just the very ends, and then place the okra in a large bowl. Salt to taste, and toss with the olive oil until coated.

2. Lift the okra from the bowl, leaving behind any excess oil. Place on a sheet pan in one layer. Roast in the oven for 15 minutes (large okra might take a little longer), shaking the pan every five minutes. The okra should be lightly browned and tender, with a nice seared aroma. If you don't want it to brown as much, set the oven at 400 degrees.

3. Remove from the heat, toss with fresh thyme, if desired, and freshly ground pepper. Transfer to a platter. Serve hot.

Serves: 4

Grilled Zucchini with mint and Feta

Ingredients:

- 4 medium zucchini, each sliced lengthwise into 3 parts
- 2 T extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 2 oz feta cheese, crumbled (1/2 cup)
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, sliced thin
- Lemon wedges for garnish

Preparations:

Heat grill to medium - high. Toss zucchini with 1 T of oil, salt and pepper. Grill zucchini until well browned all over, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer zucchini to platter, and top with cheese and mint. Drizzle with remaining T of oil and serve with lemon.

Serves: 4

Renew Boston

Renew Boston staff and volunteers from the RSVP Program came together in Cleary Square, Hyde Park on Saturday, September 10th, 2011 to reach out to neighbors and talk to them about Mayor Menino's home energy efficiency program.

"We reached out to about 95 families and signed up 31 households" folks were really excited to hear about Renew Boston and signed up on the spot! We also have a "Referral Program" if you refer a family or friend and they get a home assessment.. you get \$50.00!

"We have 4,514 streets in Boston... we have set an ambitious goal to reach everyone! We all had a great time meeting and talking to people! If you are interested call us at 617-635-SAVE (7283).



**Volunteer for
Renew Boston and Boston RSVP**

You've gained a lifetime of experience - Now is the time to put your skills and talents to good use by volunteering through Boston RSVP.

When you volunteer, you are not just helping others – you are helping yourself and helping the environment by informing and educating Boston residents on this great program that can not only save them money, but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions for our environment.

If this opportunity is for you simply call Lourdes Lopez at 617-635-2713 or email at Lourdes.Lopez@cityofboston.gov

Save Energy, Save Money

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor



A Daring Adventure

Driving back from the art gallery the thought hit me like a bolt of lightning, I was the one creating all this craziness and drama? My words rushed back to me, it’s not what happens to you it’s how you react to it. Limited sleep along with my overactive imagination had turned ordinary events into disturbing drama. I had no more need to continue this “dream stuff!”

All I really required was sleep and this was the perfect place to get it. I was lucky, back in Boston a raging blizzard had shut down the city I was in a warm beautiful place, sharing a pleasant room with charming little green lizards. It doesn’t get much better than that. I would allow myself to relax and enjoy the warmth of the sun for a week or so before returning home. This “dream stuff” was over; I had no need ever to return to that **art gallery**.

I took a long hot shower, surely this foolishness was nothing but stress caused by months and months of pushing myself to exhaustion. I should know better by now. I always put the importance of the job over my own needs. When will I ever learn, seven years of that “**man in the wheelchair**” stuff, what a laugh? I am a writer – all that writing and dream stuff comes from the same place, **wherever that is!** This is just a story I made up, it is JUST A STORY. I am living this story because I have chosen to do so. It was all very clear now: I had been programming my dreams. Could my real day-life be so

boring that excitement comes only when I am sleeping? How could I have been fooling myself all this time?

At last I felt happy, I was in control, **I had stopped the madness.** My last thought was it’s just a story, remember to write it down.

It was daybreak or so I thought. A strong clear morning light surrounded me; strange this place I am in has no walls or ceiling. In front of me was a rostrum holding a gigantic old book the page was open to the picture of the - “**old man in the wheelchair.**” The picture was alive, a movie without sound. The old man welcomed me (no words were necessary) as if we were lifelong friends; I felt his kindness and compassion.

The pages of the old book turned representing the passing of months and months and what appeared to be rehabilitation and speech therapy for the old man. The doctors all agreeing in their diagnosis; this man would never walk or talk again. The wheelchair was to be the rest of his life or what was left of this life. Nearing the end of the book, the pages stopped turning, the last picture dumbfounded me, and I was totally unprepared for what I saw. I sat up in bed with my eyes wide open, stop, stop don’t let this madness start again, this is just a story, I am making it up.

Quickly I got out of bed, showered, dressed, grabbed my notebook and drove to town for a delightful breakfast. I ordered massive amounts of food, gulped down a cup of coffee and started writing. What a compelling story, it had only taken seven years to formulate, in front of me was the rough draft the beginning, middle and now an ending. I looked around, I had eaten everything in sight and downed five cups of coffee, on top of that, my notebook was full, so was I, I was ecstatic!

There was only one thing I did not understand, those fish pictures. Why are these people so into those fish pictures? It was true the artist was brilliant, maybe it's like those people who collect pictures of puppies and cats. But really, unless you are a real fisherman how many pictures of fish do you need? Back to reality, would I regret not going to the "grand opening" at the art gallery, I may as well - I really needed to walk off some of my breakfast and I had nothing better to do.

By the time I arrived, the gallery festivities were well underway, almost over. The opening ribbon had been cut hours before and the refreshment table had been attacked and demolished. The room was flat! Nothing was going on just people milling around trying to make pleasant conversation. I went over to the table with all the fish stuff; the sign said "**Sold Out!**" A long line of patrons remained waiting for the artist to autograph and personalize water color paintings, t-shirts, caps and everything else on the table. This man was the success of the day; I still didn't get the fascination.

Suddenly the air in the room was gone, as if everyone had inhaled at the same time. Most of the "very well" dressed attendees had gathered around someone or something in the center of the room. My curiosity got the better of me. I worked my way right into the core, in person in front of me exactly as I had dreamt him (for seven years) was "the man in the wheelchair", I was speechless. The room started to spin, I needed fresh air but this was surely not the time to leave. The Jamaican nurse stood close behind the man, she was dressed for the occasion in a stunning flowered print sari with matching turban.

After all my dreams, who would believe he was real and alive. Our eyes met and he tried to smile, I could sense his sadness - the stroke had done lots of damage to this man. He kept trying to stand, the nurse kept telling him not to stand, he paid no attention to her, the room fell silent - it was terrifying to watch him struggle. At last with the help of a cane he stood upright, with great effort he mumbled something to me - I could not understand him. The nurse spoke, Mr. Cameron is inviting you to join him for tea tomorrow afternoon. This should be interesting, I thought. It would be my pleasure I answered. The nurse handed me a card with the home address and phone number on it.

Tea was more than interesting. We have been waiting for you the nurse said. How is that so, I ask her? Do you believe in dreams, she asks? After seven years of the same dream, how could I say no. Mr.

C believes everyone is connected, in our dreams we are able to communicate with those we have yet to meet. In his dreams a guardian angel comes to help him, he believes you are his guardian angel. That bit of news did not explain anything, but in some way it explained everything

And so I stayed! It began with months and months of doctor's appointments, rehabilitation and speech therapy - days upon days of sitting in one waiting room after the other and weeks of seeing many groups of doctors. Strokes very often leave the injured party in deep depression with a feeling that life is really over. Mr. C had lost everything that was important, he believed there was nothing left on which to rebuild his life. The doctors were of one mind and utterly no help, there was a short window of time they told me in which one is able to regain losses from a stroke. They assured me Mr. C would never improve beyond this point - he will never walk again. I insisted he would walk again! Fighting for my beliefs in this overwhelmingly negative environment was the hardest work I have ever chosen to do; everyday was like climbing Mt. Everest, what was I trying to prove? I longed for Boston but going home for some unknown reason was not an option.

Mr. C did not believe in himself anymore, I was not going to change that. No one has the power to change another. If I was to help this man I needed to know "precisely what I believed", at this moment I wasn't sure. I sat silently in the hospital garden; I was totally broken. A young nurses aid

who had befriended me, sat down beside me. Sad day she questioned. I nodded! Help is always all around us, but we must get out of our own way and let it happen. It's so difficult to learn to ask for help she said. ASK FOR HELP! I hadn't thought about asking, could it be that simple?

We need a total new approach I said to Mr. C here is the deal, we are a team! What you do and what I do effects the outcome of the team, a good team has to be united. You do not have to believe in you, but you must believe in ME! Does that work for you? All you have to do is the work needed to make you strong again. No thinking about it, just doing it. Are you my boss he asks. Just a good team player, please hear me, there will be no negative talk on this team, do we have an understanding? If I hear one negative word I shall immediately go back to Boston, is that clear?

Everyday Mr. C worked harder and harder, very often he cried, but there was no negative talk. At long last he was making progress. As he got better I started to understand more about the growing and learning process, it turns out Mr. C was my teacher, I was the **student**.

It had been one year I had lived this adventure. It was now time for me to go home. The outcome had been more than positive for everyone. My last day at the clinic the doctors and nurses gathered to say goodbye; it was a celebration of a learning experience we had all shared. Who is to say who is a teacher or a student,

Continued from page 22

when you drop those titles the learning really begins.

Before I left, Mr. C was walking by himself with the help of a cane. His speech was slow but clear as a bell. We even went dancing a couple of times, just the one step nothing fancy. With the help of an instructor Mr. C was learning to drive his car once again, after all he had seven polo fields on which to practice.

I learned to believe in myself when no one else did. I have always believed in prayer, miracles, faith and hope. To this day I don't understand how it all works together and I don't think I ever will. But I know it does work, I've watched it.

Several months after my return to Boston, I received a note with a picture from the nurse. Mr. C dressed in his tuxedo walked (**without a cane**) on stage to receive an extraordinary award for the great effort he had given to his community. In his thank you speech; he gave full credit for his recovery to his guardian angel.

About those large jumping fish at the art gallery they call them "The Florida Marlins" and they play big time baseball, who knew!

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature..... Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

- Helen Keller

Together we can make a difference.

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Dear EarthTalk: I thought “farm raised” was the way to go when buying fish, to avoid mercury contamination. But are there other concerns about farm raised that make some fish a poor choice for good health? What are the safest fish to buy and which should be avoided? And what about those frozen blocks of fish I get at Trader Joe’s? Are they safe to eat?

- Tim J., Springfield, MA

Mercury is a neurotoxin that settles into the ocean in large concentrations after we spew it out of industrial smokestacks when burning fossil fuels like coal and oil. It is then taken up by smaller sea life such as plankton and then spread up through the food chain as larger fish eat smaller ones. We humans then eat the mercury-laced seafood—wild salmon, tuna, swordfish and other fish—and breathe it in our air. Repeated exposure to mercury pollution can cause brain, kidney and developmental problems for people.

Farm-raised fish may have somewhat less exposure to mercury than their wild free-foraging cousins because they are usually fed a controlled diet, often consisting of more grains and soy, a cheaper and more abundant source of calories, than fishmeal. But they can still absorb mercury, since most fish farms are themselves located in the ocean, just close to or abutting the shoreline.

Farmed fish can also absorb PCBs and dioxins, as the near-shore waters they occupy are the first stop for run-off from land-based sources of pollution. And the fact that their primary feed source comes from conventionally grown terrestrial crops means that their diets can include trace amounts of pesticides and herbicides as well. Also, most farmed fish are exposed to dose after dose of antibiotics to keep diseases and pests at bay in their crowded underwater pens, much in the way “factory farmed” land animals are drugged to help them cope with cramped, unsanitary conditions. In fact, studies have shown that farm-raised fish have more toxins overall than their wild-caught cousins, though exceptions of course do exist.

The best way to know which fish are safe and which are not is to download a region-specific seafood buying guide from the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch program. These guides aid the decision-making process when shopping for seafood in a store or ordering it at a restaurant by dividing the fish available in that part of the country into three categories: Best Choices, Good Alternatives and Avoid.

And bring your Seafood Watch guide to Trader Joe’s as well—at least for now. In 2010, after months of lobbying by Greenpeace and a growing number of concerned shoppers, Trader Joe’s agreed to offer only “sustainable” seafood in its stores by the end of 2012. To its credit,

they already removed endangered Chilean Sea Bass from shelves in 2005, followed by Orange Roughy in 2009 and Red Snapper in 2010.

In the spirit of its recent pledge, however, Trader Joe's is now working with third-party, science-based organizations to establish definitions and parameters for addressing customer concerns about overfishing, destructive catch or production methods, and the importance of marine reserves. Until 2013 at Trader Joe's—and indefinitely at other stores that haven't made specific commitments regarding the sustainability of their seafood—make sure to check that labels disclose the type of fish for sale and its

source in regard to wild or farm-raised, and then check that info against the Seafood Watch list.

CONTACTS: Seafood Watch, www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx; Trader Joe's "Note to Our Customers about Trader Joe's Seafood," www.traderjoes.com/about/customer-updates.asp.

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Information Regarding your Comcast TV cable

As of September 1, 2011 Comcast is shifting of WGBX-44 (PBS) from an analog to digital format, This means that you can't view the channel without a Comcast's Digital Terminal Adapter (DTA.)

In Boston, Basic customers (formerly Broadcast Basic) can receive one digital box at no charge if they request one.

Additionally, senior citizen's have the option of the \$5.00 Senior Citizen Basic Rate.

For more information contact Comcast.

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Deputy Commissioner Tula Mahl
at 617-635-1922

Why Medicaid Matters for People with Medicare

By: Ron Pollack, Executive Director,
Families USA

You've worked hard, saved what you can, and you think you're pretty well set for retirement. However, as recent stock market fluctuations make clear, a lot can happen to derail your good planning.

For example, you might end up needing more long-term care than you expected. If that happens, the good news is that there's already a safety net out there for you and your family. It's called Medicaid and it's the state and federally funded health insurance program that serves millions of seniors, children, and people with disabilities. In fact, more than one in six Americans over 65 rely on it.

Unfortunately, there is a big misperception among many people that Medicare pays for nursing homes or home care, but that's simply not the case for most people. Medicare only pays for long-term care in very limited circumstances. In most cases, you'll have to pay yourself unless you have a long-term care insurance policy. Even if you have that kind of insurance, many policies only cover costs for a limited time or for certain services. With nursing homes averaging over \$70,000 a year and home health aides costing \$19 an hour, you may soon find that you've used up most of your life savings.

Luckily, the Medicaid safety net can

help you get the care you need. Over 60 percent of nursing home residents rely on Medicaid, but Medicaid isn't just about nursing home care. Medicaid also pays for services that help people stay in their homes longer, such as home health aides or transportation to doctors' appointments. Medicaid pays for some home care in every state, but the coverage of specific services varies.

Medicaid doesn't just help you; it also helps your family. If you're married, Medicaid includes financial protections for your spouse. That means that if you're in a nursing home, your spouse can keep some money without affecting your Medicaid eligibility. Thanks to health care reform, after 2014 that same financial protection will apply if you need home care, so the cost of your care won't impoverish your spouse. Furthermore, because Medicaid covers the cost of your long-term care, your family won't have to. Your children can keep saving for your grandchildren's education and for their own retirement. By providing care at home, Medicaid gives your family members more time for their jobs and families, lessening the stress for everyone.

Millions of seniors and their families rely on Medicaid. Unfortunately, severe program cutbacks are a real possibility, especially in light of the ongoing deficit debate. The U.S. House of Representatives already passed a proposal to make drastic cuts to the Medicaid safety net. Although this legislation did not pass the senate, the threats continue. The latest debt

compromise includes the formation of a 12 member “super committee,” and in order to meet their Thanksgiving Day deadline for a plan to reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion, Medicaid will likely face the chopping block.

Medicaid cuts would inevitably mean less help for seniors who need long-term care. There’s a better way to tackle our deficit than placing the burden on aging

Americans and their families. That’s by getting rid of tax cuts for the wealthy and closing tax loopholes for corporations—in short, taking a balanced approach to deficit reduction that makes everyone pay a fair share. Dismantling Medicaid and leaving seniors on their own to pay for long-term care would be the wrong way to go. We need to make sure that the Medicaid safety net is there to help you and your family with the high costs of long-term care.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late!

**Medicare's New Open Enrollment Period
October 15 – December 7**

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SHINE counselors provide Medicare counseling free of charge.

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Or

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Once you get the SHINE answering machine,
leave your name and number. A volunteer
will call you back as soon as possible.

Or

For assistance from a Medicare customer
service representative 24 hours/day, 7 days/week,
call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

Managing a Chronic Condition? Five Questions for Your Pharmacist

By: Sara Steindorf for CVS Caremark

Given the high prevalence of chronic disease in the U.S., it's likely that you or someone you love is living with an ongoing illness like heart disease or diabetes. In fact, about 133 million people (or 45 percent of the population) are affected by at least one chronic condition.

Fortunately, taking medication as directed can significantly improve health outcomes for people with chronic conditions. What's more, talking to a pharmacist can help patients get off on the right foot with a new medication regimen, and dedicated time with a pharmacist is readily available at your local pharmacy.

For example, the CARE 1on1 program at CVS/pharmacy offers a full prescription review and consultation with a pharmacist about medication safety, possible savings and potential side effects when you fill or transfer a new, ongoing prescription for the first time..

Boston-based pharmacist at CVS/pharmacy, Minh Do, recommends these five questions to help you get the conversation started with your pharmacist.

- How do I take my medication correctly? Knowing how and when to take a medication will help maximize its effectiveness. For example, some drugs are best taken with food or at bedtime.
- What are the possible side effects?

Your pharmacist can tell you the possible side effects, how likely they are, and what to do if they happen. Most side effects go away with time or can be managed by simple measures. Others are more serious and require a conversation with your doctor immediately.

- Why is it important to stick to my medication therapy? As your pharmacist will explain, medicine only works when it is taken as directed, and not doing so may lead to poor health and extra medical costs.
- Are there any potential drug interactions with the medications I am already taking? Some drugs do not interact well with others, and can result in a decrease in effectiveness or even an increase in the toxicity of the drug. Your pharmacist can help you reduce the risk of dangerous drug interactions. It's best to bring all of your prescriptions to one pharmacy, creating a "pharmacy home." And, make your pharmacist aware of all prescriptions and over-the-counter medications you take.
- How can I save money on prescription drugs? Your pharmacist can inform you about less expensive, generic alternatives to your brand name drugs, or about other cost-saving measures such as using a mail-order pharmacy.

Addressing such questions with your pharmacist can help make treatment of a chronic disease more manageable, ultimately leading to better health.

LGBT Boat Trip



City Fresh - Senior Party in the Park



Consumer Protection Campaign - If it's too nice, think twice



Advisory Council Luncheon at La Famiglia Spagnuolo



Matinee at the Strand Theater



South Boston Italian Night



Majesty Boat Trip



Mayor's Coffee Hour at Blake Estates



October Is White Cane Awareness Month



**Yield To White Cane
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Massachusetts White Cane Law: General Law Chapter 90 Section 14A
For more information, contact the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
617-727-5550/V or 800-392-6450/V-6556/TTY www.mass.gov.ma.us/mcb