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President Obama's Nominee for U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging Confirmed by Senate

On Thursday evening, June 25, 2009, Kathy Greenlee, Kansas Secretary for Aging, was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Assistant Secretary for Aging, and sworn in by HHS Secretary Sebelius on June 29, 2009. Kathy Greenlee is the 4th Assistant Secretary for Aging in the United States, and was nominated for the position by President Obama on May 4, 2009. To hear Assistant Secretary Greenlee's videotaped greeting, please visit <http://www.aoa.gov>

Prior to her confirmation, Assistant Secretary Greenlee was interviewed by AARP Bulletin about her new position and responsibilities. To read the interview in its entirety, please visit: http://bulletin.aarp.org/yourworld/politics/articles/kathy_greenlee_confirmed_as_new_u_s_aging_chief_hold_hold_hold_until_greenlee_confirmed_by_senate.html

President Obama Commemorates Anniversary of Olmstead Decision with the Launch of *The Year of Community Living*

President Barack Obama marked the tenth anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision in the case of Olmstead v. L.C. with the launch of *The Year of Community Living*, a new effort to assist Americans with disabilities. In his remarks, President Obama noted "The Olmstead ruling was a critical step forward for our nation, articulating one of the most fundamental rights of Americans with disabilities: Having the choice to live independently."

The President has directed Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan to work together to identify ways to improve access to housing, community supports, and independent living arrangements.

HHS Secretary Sebelius joined President Obama in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Olmstead decision by stating "that to begin this "Year of Community Living," agencies within my department will undertake the task of aggressively addressing barriers that prevent some Americans with disabilities from enjoying a meaningful life as part of their community. These agencies, which include AoA, with the support of the department, will work together to put in place solutions that address barriers to community living for individuals with disabilities and to give people more control over their lives and the

supports they need.” To read the Secretary’s complete statement, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/06/20090622a.html>

Secretary Sebelius also announced a funding opportunity that will make it easier for older people, younger adults, and their families to learn about and access health and long-term care options through Aging and Disability Resource Center Programs, a collaborative effort of the Administration on Aging AoA and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid CMS.

To read the entire press release for this announcement, go to <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/06/20090622b.html>

President Obama Unveils *United We Serve*, Calls on All Americans to Commit to Meaningful Volunteer Service in Their Daily Lives

In a June 16 video message, President Barack Obama unveiled *United We Serve*, an extended call to service challenging all Americans to help lay a new foundation for growth in this country by engaging in sustained, meaningful community service. The initiative will be led by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency dedicated to fostering service in communities across the country. Since his Inauguration, the President has called on all Americans to serve their communities and be a part of building a better future for our country.

The United We Serve summer initiative began on June 22nd and runs through the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11th. The National Day of Service and Remembrance was created by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which President Obama signed in April to help encourage and facilitate community service across the country. During this summer, the President is renewing his call to all Americans to identify needs in their communities, engage in meaningful service to create change – and stay engaged with those projects long after September.

AoA would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers across the country whose selfless actions are helping older Americans live quality lives. Please visit <http://www.serve.gov>, the Corporation for National and Community Service website, to view President Obama’s message, to create new service projects, to find service projects in your community, and to share stories about projects that are making a difference.

AoA News

AoA’s SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program Featured in Recent Wall Street Journal Column

AoA's SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) program was featured in a recent column in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). WSJ reporter Melinda Beck offers advice to help consumers avoid Medicare fraud. "Consumers should be "vigilant about the goods and services charged to Medicare and insurers on their behalf." For instance, "phony solicitors may call older adults offering to replace their complicated prescription drug benefit for a flat monthly fee -- and all they need is the person's Medicare and credit-card numbers." Barbara Dieker, director of the Office of Elder Rights at the US Administration on Aging said, "Older people are often very trusting, and these people work at being ingratiating." The Senior Medicare Patrol, overseen by the AoA, trains volunteers to "help identify and prevent fraud. The program now has groups in all 50 states and more than 4,685 volunteers." Since 1997, "it has recovered \$4.5 million in Medicare funds." To read the entire article, please visit <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204456604574202183282412334.html>

AoA Widget Offers Weekly Healthy Living Tips

AoA is pleased to present weekly Healthy Living Tips through the "Living Today for a Better Tomorrow" widget. You can access the widget at <http://www.aoa.gov>. The widget will allow our partners in the aging network and others to offer visitors to their web sites a weekly message that provides older adults with helpful tips and tools to assist them in making healthy decisions. To download this widget, visit http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/site_utilities/widget/index.aspx#healthy_tip

National Resource Center on Native American Aging Honors Hometown "Heroes"

The amazing stories of all 45 nominees gave the National Resource Center on Native American Aging Selection Committee no choice but to recognize all of the nominees as Hometown "Heroes." Each honoree has received a plaque in recognition of their service to elderly Native Americans. The group was also honored at the 2009 National Title VI Training & Technical Assistance Forum in April. Each "Hero" had a special story that demonstrated a giving spirit and served as an example of a real hero to young people. Their commitment has helped native elders solve local problems, share cultural traditions and build stronger communities.

To learn more about the 45 Hometown "Heroes," go to http://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/nrcnaa/heroes_awards.php

Other HHS News

Statement by Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on National HIV Testing Day – June 27, 2009

Every nine and a half minutes, someone in the United States becomes infected with HIV. Many people who have HIV don't know it. But many people who do know are living longer, healthier lives with treatment. In addition, once people know their HIV status, they are more likely to take precautions to reduce HIV transmission to their partners. This means HIV testing can help reduce new cases of HIV. To read the entire statement, please visit

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2009pres/06/20090626d.html>

Secretary Sebelius Releases New State by State Reports Highlighting Urgent Need for Health Reform

HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has released a series of new reports on the health care status quo that highlight the urgent need for health reform across the nation. Each report includes data regarding the health care status quo such as:

- * Percent increase in family premiums since 2000
- * The hidden tax individuals and families pay as a result of subsidizing care for the uninsured
- * Percent of state residents without insurance
- * Overall quality ratings for health care in each state
- * The impact of failing to adequately invest in preventative measures that could prevent disease and illness

The new reports are available at <http://www.HealthReform.gov> and include information on health care cost and quality in all fifty states.

HHS Secretary Sebelius Releases New Report on Health Disparities

Speaking last month at a White House Health Care Stakeholder Discussion on the importance of reform that reduces disparities that exist in our current health care system, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the release of *Health Disparities: A Case for Closing the Gap*, a new report on health disparities in America. Detailing the report findings, Secretary Sebelius noted that “Minorities and low-income Americans are more likely to be sick and less likely to get the care they need.”

The report notes that 40 percent of low-income Americans do not have health insurance. About one-third of the uninsured have a chronic disease, and they are six times less likely to receive care for a health problem than the insured. In contrast, only 6 percent of high-income Americans lack insurance.

To read the entirety of this report and others related to health reform, go to <http://www.healthreform.gov/reports/index.html>

Acting Surgeon General Issues “Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes”

The Acting Surgeon General’s, Steven K. Galson, M.D., M.P.H., recently-issued *Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes* looks at the ways housing can affect health. In issuing the release Dr. Galson urged everyone from parents and homebuilders to community leaders and policy makers to embrace the holistic approach to creating healthy homes outlined in the *Call to Action*.

During the event, Ron Sims, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) also announced the release of HUD’s *Healthy Homes Strategic Plan*. HUD’s plan demonstrates why healthy homes is a national priority, describes what steps should be taken to achieve healthier housing, and highlights the key public and private partners for implementation.

Please visit <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov> to download The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes, or to listen to a podcast from the Acting Surgeon General.

To order a printed copy of The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Healthy Homes, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or email cdcinfo@cdc.gov and reference the publication title. For more on HUD’s plan please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyhomes>

Federal Funding Opportunities

Grant Applications Now Available for the 2010 Healthy Vision Community Awards Program

The National Eye Institute (NEI) will fund up to \$10,000.00 to programs that support the Healthy Vision 2010 objectives and the Healthy People 2010 goals to reduce health disparities and improve quality of life. The focus of each program must be eye health education.

The 2010 HVCA funds are not intended for research projects or to provide direct medical care. Nonprofit organizations are encouraged to apply, including community-based organizations and agencies, minority-based organizations, schools, faith-based organizations, civic and fraternal groups, community clinics, local Agencies on Aging, and state and local health departments and agencies. Universities and university affiliations, such as medical centers and schools of optometry and ophthalmology, are precluded from receiving an

award directly, but are welcome to collaborate with eligible groups, such as community-based organizations

All applications must be postmarked by **Monday, August 31, 2009**. Awards will be announced in March 2010. Application forms and program information are available at <http://www.healthyvision2010.org/news/hvca/>

If you have questions about the application package or eligibility requirements, please e-mail your questions or requests to HVCAMail@shs.net

To find program ideas or to search for programs that have been funded in your state, visit the [Healthy Vision Community Programs Database](#)

More Aging News

Veterans Benefits Reference Guide Now Available

The latest edition of VA's Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors is now available. The 164-page handbook provides the latest information on important changes in eligibility for VA medical care and benefits. It describes other federal benefits, including education, disability compensation, pension, home loan guarantee, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance, and burial assistance. This year's addition marks the addition of "Survivors" to the title as well as details on the post 9/11 bill signed into law in 2008. Printed copies may be ordered from the Government Printing Office at \$5 a copy. To get the online version, please visit http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp

VA Begins Stimulus Payments to Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has requested the Department of the Treasury to make \$250 payments to eligible Veterans as part of President Obama's Recovery plan. The first payments were sent Monday, June 22. <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1712>

Screenings of the New Award-Winning Documentary - *THE WAY WE GET BY*

Bangor International Airport is the main exit and entry point for U.S. troops going to and returning from Iraq and Afghanistan – and Maine's Troop Greeters have thanked and shaken hands with 800,000+ of them since 2003. The film explores how this small gesture creates a meaningful exchange for two very different groups. What begins as a somewhat idiosyncratic story about the senior citizens who gather daily to thank American soldiers quickly turns into a deeply moving, compassionate story about aging, loneliness, war and mortality.

For more information about the film, and the cities in which it will be shown, please go to <http://www.thewaywegetbymovie.com>. Group discounts and free tickets are available.

Florida Department of Elder Affairs Issues “Disaster Preparedness Guide for Elders.”

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs has issued 250,000 copies of its annual Disaster Preparedness Guide for Elders to help Florida seniors and their families prepare for disasters and emergencies. A Spanish language version has also been widely distributed. The Guide provides useful and timely information about what steps individuals can take to stay safe, and what resources are available throughout the state and in their communities. Recently, Florida staged a catastrophic “mock event” for all disaster response agencies to practice response plans and identify changes needed. Florida Secretary Doug Beach highlighted the Guide during testimony before the Senate Special Committee on Aging June 24 hearing on Emergency Preparedness and older Americans. To read an online version of the Guide, please visit: <http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/english/disasterguide/2009.pdf>

EyeCare America Offers Free Eye Care to America's Elderly

EyeCare America, a non-profit public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is offering no-cost medical eye care to qualified seniors. The program runs until August 31.

EyeCare America's Senior EyeCare Program is designed for U.S. citizens or legal residents who are 65 years of age or older and have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years. They must also not belong to a health maintenance organization (HMO) or the Veterans Administration. The program includes a comprehensive eye exam and care for any disease detected in the initial visit for up to one year following the exam. For seniors without an ophthalmologist, care will be provided at no out-of-pocket cost.

To learn more about this program, visit <http://www.eyecareamerica.org/eyecare/care/senior-eyecare.cfm>

Recent Study Offers Strategies to Increase Low-Income Seniors Participation in Benefits Programs

Findings in a recent study by the Commonwealth Fund show that some of the most vulnerable Americans, low-income seniors, do not participate in benefit programs for which they are eligible. The study concludes that the two major obstacles to enrollment are lack of knowledge about public benefit programs and the complexity of application and enrollment processes. It also identifies

several ways of helping low-income elders get the health care they need: simplifying and aligning eligibility rules and enrollment procedures; using a "person-centered," one-on-one approach to outreach and enrollment; investing in information technology; and providing support for ongoing outreach and enrollment activities. To read the full report, go to <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Fund-Reports/2009/May/Increasing-Participation-in-Benefit-Programs-for-Low-Income-Seniors.aspx>

Protecting Your Aging Parent's Financial Future

Financial planning that involves your parents – and most elderly people for that matter – can be difficult. One big problem with some older spouses or parents is that they are often very reluctant to share their financial information or the terms of their wills and trusts with family members, even with their spouses. But with early communication all is not lost.

For tips on protecting the financial future of your aging parents—and all elderly people, go to <http://www.gilbertguide.com/articles/financial-planning-how-to-protect-your-aging-parents-financial-future/>

Harrah's Foundation Gives \$1.1 Million to AARP to Enhance Its Caregiving Activities

At the AARP's 2009 Diversity and Aging Conference, Robin Talbert, AARP Foundation president, announced a \$1.1 million gift from the Harrah's Foundation to help current and former caregivers meet caregiving responsibilities while building their own long-term financial security.

In making the announcement, Talbert stated "As the U.S. population ages, caregiving is becoming an increasingly important component in the lives of all Americans, particularly as they approach retirement." He added "With the help of this generous gift from the Harrah's Foundation, the AARP Foundation is in a unique position to help caregivers fulfill their responsibilities and employers create environments that support them."

To learn more about the AARP's Caregiving programs, go to <http://www.aarp.org>

For more information on the Harrah's Foundation, go to <http://www.harrahs.com/harrahs-corporate/about-us-community.html>

Ready Video Blog Helps Americans Prepare for Emergencies

The Department of Homeland Security's *Ready* Campaign hosts an emergency preparedness video blog and it is looking for Americans who have recently

experienced an emergency situation to help tell Americans why it is important to take steps in advance to prepare. The video blog, housed on the *Ready* Campaign website <http://www.ready.gov>, aims to inspire more Americans to get an emergency supply kit, make an emergency plan and to be informed about the different emergencies that can happen.

To learn how to submit a video blog and to learn more about the *Ready* Campaign, go to <http://www.ready.gov/vblog/about.html>

Submit a Story!

Have you submitted your story yet? These stories were submitted through AoA's website.

Appreciating a Caregiver

I am a 58 year old female living in central New Hampshire. I have been married for 33 years and we have one daughter. In 1988, I learned I had multiple sclerosis and that was the “good” news. Prognosis and progression were unpredictable and my (our) life became wait and see what happens next. I worked as a federal projects bookkeeper with our local school system. Years of slow, continuing decline followed. I made adjustments and kept going for 20 years. Bladder issues required self-cathing at work. Then as walking became more difficult, I devised a push-club of my co-worker friends to push me in my desk chair to the bathroom door when needed. In June of 2008 when rising from a chair required lifting and independent standing was impossible, I had to stop working. My husband, life-partner has been with me through it all. He has been an extraordinary caregiver in all respects – from housekeeper to nurse. I feel so, so blessed. **Submitted by Sandra Finnie.**

F.I.S.H. Volunteers on Call to Transport Seniors

The Sudbury (MA) Senior Center's F.I.S.H. (Friends In Service Helping) volunteer medical rides program arranged 1,791 free rides to medical appointments over a recent 12-month period. Drivers take adults of any age to medical appointments in the greater Boston area, and as far west as Worcester. The 3,248 hours of volunteer time had an equivalent value of \$15 an hour, equating to a donation of \$48,720. The actual donation was even greater because the volunteers use their own automobiles and donate the cost of the gas. Several riders use FISH routinely. Some use the program to get to dialysis treatments. It is a source of pride that the program is so reliable that it can consistently offer this life-or-death service. One rider sent a thank you note to the Senior Center which said, “Your wonderful drivers are like Christmas gifts spread throughout the year.” F.I.S.H. requests a week's notice for rides, but can usually handle last minute requests as well. For example, last winter the

Senior Center received a call from a cancer treatment center in Westford, MA. An 80 year old woman who lives alone had driven herself there for surgery to remove a skin cancer from her nose. The treatment was extensive, taking almost four hours and resulting in a large bandage that partially obscured her vision. The doctor was adamant that she was unsafe to drive herself home. F.I.S.H. was called and two people went, one to drive the senior home and the other to drive her car home for her. **Submitted by Kristin Kiesel, Sudbury Senior Center.**

Volunteers Join Forces to Distribute Meals

I am an Adult Protective Services Social Worker in Door County, Wisconsin. Our agency is working in collaboration with our local aging unit (Door County Senior Resource Center) to expand meal delivery to homebound seniors in our community. We are geographically challenged and have only a limited radius for meals on wheels delivery. We are working to expand our frozen meal program to address the needs of those seniors who are not in the MOWs delivery area. Despite budget constraints, we are hopeful that we can be successful - thanks in part to vital volunteers. We are going to partner with other organizations (such as churches throughout the county) and utilize volunteers to assist with packaging and delivering meals. This service is crucial to enable our quickly aging population to live their "golden years" with safety, independence and good health. We hope President Obama's call to action will motivate even more of our citizens to assist us in making this goal a reality through volunteer service. **Submitted by Erin Szakala, Door County, WI.**

Loveland Village Lives Up to Its Name

They say that love is what makes the world go round. If someone is looking for love, Good Samaritan Society, Loveland Village is the place to find it. The residents, staff and volunteers work together to spread their love throughout the community in many different ways. From the Valentine re-mailing program to Relay for Life, Loveland Village is sure to have a team of volunteers. Many residents love to knit and crochet; an art that has not died through the ages. Last year a group of residents and staff members got together, with the help of the director of wellness, Vicki McCarger, and started a biweekly "pay it forward" knitting group. They've recently renamed themselves the "Coed Wool Workers". They gather together and create not only practical items for use, but tall tales and laughter weave through the hooks, needles, and yarn. Amongst the laughter and fun, these residents are making a difference in the community. They make tiny baby hats for newborns at McKee Medical Center, adult size hats for those at the homeless shelters, and lap robes for the McKee Cancer Center that not only warm the patients, but warm hearts and spirits as well. Why do they do it? Richard says he loves the idea of spreading good will and giving back to the community. Some like the snacks and sociability of the group while Marion says it just plain "keeps us out of mischief." From knitting

raffle items for the Alzheimer's society to crocheting shawls for Good Samaritan residents, "paying it forward" and spreading love is what keeps Loveland Village a special place for the whole community. Love really does make the world go round. **Submitted by Holly Haubold, Good Samaritan Society, Loveland, CO.**

Click on the link below to share your story with us, and it may appear on our website or in this enewsletter!

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/For_The_Press/medadv/Share_Story.aspx

Conferences

Stay up to date with the latest aging meetings and conferences by visiting the AoA events calendar at:

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Press_Room/events/events_List_Day.aspx#title.

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