

SENIOR SENSE

Information,
Education and
Training to Help
Older Adults Maintain
Healthy Lifestyles

Fall 2005

Thoughts on Aging

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning today is young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.

Henry Ford

No wise man ever wished to be younger.

Jonathan Swift

You can't help getting older, but you don't have to get old.

George Burns

Program Delivers a Vital Message to Older Adults

Created to reach older adults in New Jersey, Senior Sense increases the awareness of the magnitude and seriousness of alcohol, prescription drug and over-the-counter drug abuse among seniors.

Barbara Clancey, recently named Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Director of Senior Programs, has been administering Senior Sense since 2002.

"Over the past three years, we've created a very robust program for older adults," explained Clancey. "We started with a Center for Substance Abuse Prevention approved prevention program developed by COMPDug Inc., and enhanced it with strategies found in the Get Connected Toolkit designed by the Substance Abuse and

Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Council on Aging (NCOA)."

The program consists of three separate sessions administered by Prevention Specialists.

"One of our goals for the next three-year cycle is to forge links between seniors and service providers for screenings and treatment."

The first session uses games and skits to help seniors reassess their attitudes and beliefs about use and abuse. The Specialists address how body changes due to the aging process can increase adverse drug reactions in seniors and how age-related stresses can put older adults at increased risk for increased alcohol consumption. They also focus on the dangers

that can come from the interactions herbal remedies and over-the-counter medications may cause.

"I am amazed at how well-received these trainings are and at how

grateful the seniors are for the information," said Clancey. "Some of the people who've received the training have admitted that they didn't know enough about their own medications or that they never knew things they've gotten over the counter needed to be considered in the mix," she continued.

See Page 2

Program Delivers Vital Message to Seniors

From Page 1

During this session, Senior Sense provides participants with self-screening tools for alcohol and medication abuse and depression. In addition to providing these diagnostic tools, Prevention Specialists share information about local resources.

The second portion of the program helps older adults prepare for a doctor's visit and stresses the importance of establishing good, clear communications with doctors and health care providers. Prevention Specialists reinforce self-advocacy skills and share ways of making the most of a medical visit.

The third session, Positively Aging, advocates good nutrition, remaining active in the community and exercise. "Staying healthy as you age is as much about mental health as it is about physical health. Good nutrition is essential to maintaining cognitive and physical functioning and it promotes health by lowering chronic disease risk," said Clancey.

"We like to remind older adults that mobility and functioning can be improved through physical activity, even for

people who are frail or very old. We also like to encourage seniors to stay active and connected to the community. All of these things can enhance the quality of life for seniors," she said.

Since receiving the grant, Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Senior Programs department has reached out to hundreds of older adults in Mercer County. The program has been presented to seniors living in subsidized housing and adult communities. It has also been presented at nutrition sites and adult daycare facilities. The trainings have been given to staff members at these facilities as well as other service providers.

"One of our goals for the next three-year cycle is to forge links between seniors and service providers for screenings and treatment," said Clancey. "Another goal is to foster connections between Alcoholics Anonymous groups and senior centers and living facilities. It's a logical pairing that benefits both groups: seniors can receive the 12-step services they need in familiar and easily accessible locations and it opens up meeting venues for A.A. groups."

"I am pleased that

Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey is able to provide the Senior Sense program," said Executive Director Jack Mudge. "Helping seniors recognize the signs and symptoms of medication misuse and alcohol abuse and providing them with resources is

a vital part of making sure that New Jersey's older residents remain healthy and active."

For more information about the **Senior Sense** program, contact Barbara Clancey at 888-322-1918 ext. 521 or via email at bclancey@cpofnj.org.

NJ Partners Names Clancey Co-Chair

New Jersey Partners: Aging, Mental Health and Substance Abuse installed Barbara Clancey as a Co-Chair during the organization's August meeting in Tinton Falls, NJ.



Barbara Clancey

The organization builds awareness of the unique mental health and substance abuse issues facing older adults. It also promotes education and leadership among stakeholders and works to make a positive impact on service delivery systems.

"I am honored to serve as Co-Chair for New Jersey Partners. I think its mission and focus really reflect the goals of Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey's Department of Senior Programs," said Clancey. "Working together, member agencies share information and ideas that help us become better resources for older adults dealing with the problem of substance abuse."

For more information about New Jersey Partners, visit www.njpartners.org.

Computer Training Expands Horizons for Mercer County's Seniors

Imagine a day going by without spending time on your computer. For many of us, it's practically unfathomable. Whether we're logging on to download directions, emailing a friend or checking the latest headlines, we rely on this technology more and more.

Imagine how frustrating it must be for the generation caught behind this techno-wave - the people who came of age long before Bill Gates was born. Surely they must notice the changes in the way people com-

municate and the way business is being conducted...

Senior Sense has been offering computer training to older adults in Mercer County as a part of its program to keep seniors connected and active in the community. The free ten-hour training has introduced many seniors to the computer and made countless others more technically savvy.

Many of the county's nutrition sites and senior living facilities provide computer access. This training lets seniors take advantage.

"Kids today grow up with this stuff, so for them getting on the Internet is nothing," said student Helen Hatrak. "In this class, we've learned how to access the Internet and send email. I feel confident enough now with my skills to invest in a computer," Hatrak continued.

"The seniors love our computer training," said Prevention Specialist Dan Firrincili. "We cover everything from the very basics like turning the computer on, if that's what's needed, to email and the Internet," he said. "I've had students with a variety of different skill levels, but what they all have in common is a desire to learn," Firrincili continued.



Many Mercer County Seniors have learned computer skills through the Senior Sense program.



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NJ Partners to host Educational Forum Regarding 2005 White House Conference on Aging

The December 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) offers a unique opportunity to improve the lives of older New Jerseyans, including persons affected by mental illness and/or substance abuse.

NJ Partners: Aging, Mental Health and Substance Abuse will conduct an educational forum that draws upon the expertise of invited WHCoA delegates and other stakeholders. The forum is being convened to highlight what a WHCoA may accomplish with regard to mental illness, addictions, poverty and/or multi-cultural concerns. The forum will also introduce trends, disparities, problems and possibilities.

The meeting will be held on Friday, October 21 at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's Technical Assistance Center in Piscataway from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

For more information about the forum, contact Barbara Clancey at 888-322-1918 ext. 521 or via email a.bclancey@cpofnj.org.