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*The ultimate folly is to think that something crucial to your welfare is being taken care of for you.*  
—Robert Brault, American operatic tenor

# SENIOR DAY A SUCCESS

## Hosted by Colorado Senior Lobby

**O**n March 20 more than 200 seniors descended on the State Capitol to demonstrate to importance of seniors in the political process.

Some call this **SENIOR POWER**. They recognize that this is a time when programs important to Seniors are being carefully scrutinized as both state and national legislators search for areas to cut spending.

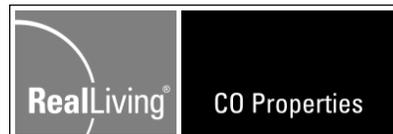
Senior Lobby will continue to host this event every year. So watch future publications for the date. (But it is typically in mid March while the legislature is in session.)

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** There are seniors who would attend this event but consider that transportation, parking etc. are more than they want to deal with. Anyone who is willing to provide assistance should contact Ed Shackelford.

**ANNUAL MEETING:** The annual meeting will be in August. There is always an interesting program. This is also a time then we elect new directors for 2 year terms. We would like to hear from anyone who would have an interest in becoming actively involved with the Senior Lobby.

*"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt." ~ Margaret Atwood*

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## **SENATE BILL 127**

### **INCREASED FUNDING FOR OLDER COLORADANS FUND**

**A**s originally proposed the bill provided for an increase in the annual fund of \$4 million next year, an additional \$4 million for each of the next 2 years taking the fund to \$20 million after 3 years. As currently amended, the bill provides for an increase in the fund of \$2 million and an additional \$2 million coming from the general fund. This does provide for the upcoming year, but the basic fund is only increased to \$10 million. Any additional funding is subject to the vagaries of the annual budget process. No provision is made for future increases.

The Older Coloradans Fund provides important funding at-risk older adults. We encourage everyone to contact their legislators and tell them this is important legislation and should be passed as originally drafted. We also need to prepare for this issue again next year because the need will still be there. These programs not only improve the quality of life: they also save significantly more money than the cost. When you can keep someone out of assisted living or a nursing home by investing modest amount to save a significant amount.

Here are specific examples showing the benefits of the Older Coloradans Fund:

#### *Pitkin County 2012:*

*Mr. C will be 91 this year. He has no family and he is very private and independent. He lives alone on less than \$20,000 per year, in a housing authority complex. He utilizes the senior lunch program regularly for both nutrition and social interaction. In recent years he has had difficulty keeping up his apartment, and was threatened with possible eviction if he could not keep it clean and maintained. His personal hygiene had declined and people were avoiding interaction with him. He also experienced health problems; his primary care is provided by the Veteran's hospital 125 miles away. Senior Services provided to Mr C include: care management to assess and prioritize his needs, arrange housekeeping assistance, and recruit a volunteer to help with cooking and laundry; a grant for new tires so his minimal driving could be safer in winter; a volunteer driver to the Veteran's hospital; and help organizing his paperwork.*

*Mrs. C, a recently widowed 69 year old woman living in a remote area of the county, was struggling with health problems this winter. She doesn't drive, although she has a horse. Senior Services arranged for a volunteer to drive her to the doctor and reimbursed fuel expenses, delivered a Blizzard Box of emergency food supplies, and visited with Mrs. C about services that could be provided to assist her in the future.*

#### *Boulder County Meal site:*

*"My wife and I started coming to the Meal Program right when we moved here in 2000 from Boston. After my wife passed in 2005, I continued to come to Brooks Café on a regular basis because of the good food, good people and the meal helps me have a balanced meal at least once a day. It also helps me socially since I am in a wheelchair and I am unable to get out much." Mr. S*

### **Rural Area Meal Program (RAMP), Fountain Valley:**

The best reward for both the transportation and the RAMP programs is to hear the heartfelt testimonials from clients. A few of these are: "I don't know what I'd do without you", "I've been praying and thanking the Lord for you", "The meals are all so good", "I like the proportions", "If it wasn't for these meals, I'd never get a decent meal".

### **Eckert, CO:**

Kathy made a dramatic statement to the Senior Community Meals Registered Dietician one day. She said, "Senior Community Meals saved my life." She explained that she had been living alone, on limited resources, in poor health, not getting out much, isolated from family and eating irregularly. She started coming to the congregate meal site to eat, and the cooks found out she needed to gain weight. The cooks made sure Kathy was receiving a nutritious, balanced lunch. Even though Kathy didn't really know anybody, other meal participants started including her at their tables. Someone found out she needed a couple upkeep things done at her house, and to her surprise they came and helped her out. Kathy continues to join her friends at the congregate meal site several days a week, and even enjoys cooking a little bit for herself. Kathy sees so much improvement from how she felt before coming to the meal site, she is sure she would have continued downhill if she hadn't started participating. That is why she can say "Senior Community Meals saved my life." And it is no exaggeration.

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony. ~Mahatma Gandhi

The moments of happiness we enjoy take us by surprise. It is not that we seize them, but that they seize us. ~Ashley Montagu

Go back a little to leap further. ~John Clarke

It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to

### **DRCOG:**

Rose is an 83 year old widowed woman living independently in her own home. She came to Jewish Family Services (JFS) 6 years ago after her husband passed away. Rose has no children or family living close by. Initially, JFS provided Rose with housekeeping through the Homemaker program and transportation to and from medical appointments. Rose no longer drives and because of her increasing health issues, cannot perform everyday housekeeping chores. As Rose has become more frail and home-bound, JFS began providing her with Kosher Meals on Wheels as well as a weekly volunteer who provides friendly visiting and companionship. The care manager now helps Rose with her monthly bill paying, coordinates her medical appointments, and oversees all of the other services that JFS provides. The care manager has also brought in yard cleaning and home maintenance services provide by JFS' community partners. When Rose needed help with selecting a Medicare drug program the care manager was able to find her an affordable plan that fit her prescription needs. Rose is just one of the many examples of seniors who are becoming more frail, but are able to remain safely in their homes because of JFS.

## Peace Of Mind

Once, a wise man was walking from one town to another town with a few of his followers. While they were travelling, they came upon a lake. They stopped there and the wise man beckoned to one of his followers, a particularly eager-to-please young man. He said, "I am thirsty. Do get me some water from that lake there."

The follower eagerly ran to the lake. When he reached it, he saw people washing clothes and a bullock cart crossing through the lake. As a result, the water was muddy and cloudy.

The follower tried to get everyone out of the lake, but no one would listen to him. He grew frustrated and went back to the wise man. Feeling ashamed, he told him, "The water in there is very muddy. I don't think it is fit to drink." After about half an hour, again the wise man asked the same follower to go back to the lake and get him some water to drink.

The follower obediently went back to the lake. This time he found that the lake had absolutely clear water in it. The mud had settled down and the water above it looked fit to be drunk. So he collected some water in a pot and brought it to the wise man.

The wise man looked at the water, and then he looked at the follower and said, "See what you did to make the water clean. You let it be ... and the mud settled down by itself, and you got clear water!

"Your mind is also like that. When it is disturbed, just let it be. Give it a little time. It will settle down. You don't have to put in any effort to calm it down. It will happen. It is effortless."

*I find that often the best reaction to anger or frustration is patience. There's something to be said for the old adage, "Take a deep breath and count to 10."*

*You must look into other people as well as at them. ~Lord Chesterfield  
The secret of many a man's success in the world resides in his insight into the moods of men and his tact in dealing with them. ~J. G. Holland  
If you would create something, you must be something.  
~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## SENIOR LOBBY THOUGHTS ON MEDICARE

SENT TO COLORADO LEGISLATORS, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP,

THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

Colorado Senior Lobby has voted to support a resolution urging you to strongly support programs which serve senior citizens and the disabled. We are particularly concerned about preserving Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. In general, these programs are a vital life line for the majority of our older and disabled citizens. These programs contribute to the stability, health and well being of recipients and their families.

Social Security, historically, has proven the most efficient and cost effective way to assure an income floor against poverty for all Americans. Prior to its inception in 1935 and later improvements in coverage, aging or onset of disability generally meant living in devastating poverty. Social Security has proven effective in providing an economic floor for citizens and should not be sacrificed or weakened to address a budget deficit to which it has not contributed. Not only has Social Security not contributed to the deficit, it currently has a 2.7 trillion dollar surplus. Lastly, Social Security is an effective economic stimulant; Social Security payments are generally spent for basic needs in the month they are received.

Medicare, as currently formatted, is funded through 2024. Again, Medicare has not contributed to the national deficit and should not be sacrificed to pay expenses incurred elsewhere. Historically, prior to its inception in 1965, the elderly and disabled were uninsured. Medicare has proven a cost effective and efficient way to insure older and disabled Americans. It allows citizens to, in effect, pre-pay their health insurance premiums while still working, providing affordable coverage and care once they have left the workforce. While Medicare faces long term solvency issues, this problem is a function of out of control health care cost inflation and not due to Medicare itself. Medicare, also, should not be sacrificed to address a budget deficit incurred elsewhere.

Medicaid is vitally needed to address health care costs for lower income citizens and increasingly by middle class families to defray long term care expenses. Experience shows lack of access to health care, particularly preventative care, escalates the amount of care needed and contributes to early death. Concerning long term care, most Americans do not have the financial ability to personally address these expenses should it become necessary. Neither do their family members. Medicaid often becomes the economic firewall against financial disaster for affected individuals and their families.

In conclusion, Social Security and Medicare have not contributed to the national deficit. They are funded by payroll deductions which, in effect, constitute premiums. These are earned benefits, purchased by the wage earner. Medicaid, while funded by general tax revenues, is a vital firewall against loss of access to health care coverage and, in an increasing number of cases, family financial disaster. These programs have proven reliable, cost effective and efficient methods of providing basic income and health care support for our most vulnerable citizens and should not be sacrificed to pay for expenses incurred elsewhere.

Sincerely,

Colorado Senior Lobby

## **Moving Our Elders from Nursing Homes to Assisted Living—Not an Easy Task**

By Chris Butler

I once heard that America institutionalizes two populations—our felons and elders. We have grown complacent with our nursing homes and few question their necessity; they are part of our world. Yet, few elders choose to live their final years in a nursing home. In spite of Culture Change efforts most nursing homes still look, feel, and smell like nursing homes—institutional living.

Many of our elders are institutionalized after a brief hospitalization then ten to twenty days of rehabilitation services. Families are rarely prepared to set up home health services, leaving the nursing home the easier option. *It's just down the hall.*

Funding is stream lined as well. Once personal funds are depleted, Medicaid will “kick-in.” Our State's dwindling Medicaid funds will pay the nursing home an excess of \$6,000 per month. Most residents in nursing homes are on Medicaid.

The federal government is offering States incentives to utilize less costly means of caring for the disabled and elderly. Unfortunately these programs are aimed mostly at helping the disabled move into apartments or smaller settings. Most elders will need assistance with their medications, cooking, hydration, and a host of other elder issues. Independent living is not a realistic goal. Assisted living is a realistic option at a far less cost to the government with an increased quality of life. The federal government is not offering incentives for this option.

Medicaid pays assisted living a little more than \$2,000 per month. The average rate for quality assisted living care is \$3,000-\$4,000 per month. The assisted living home is losing money for each Medicaid resident it takes in. Due to this loss, there are less Medicaid beds in assisted living forcing elders and the disabled to be unnecessarily placed in nursing homes. Elders currently in assisted living are also forced to move into the nursing home when their funds run out. One memory care provider shares an example, “One of my clients just moved out because they spent down. They left me at \$4,200 a month all-inclusive to go to skilled Medicaid with reimbursement of \$6,800 a month. This is ridiculous and a waste of State funds. Our staffing ratio is much higher.”

A bill, SB12-128, passed last year as a pilot study to increase Medicaid assisted-living reimbursement as an incentive to open more assisted living beds. This would create a less costly care model for elders with an improved quality of life as well. Could our Colorado government come up with a solution not relying on a federal program? How can we become active to decrease the number of institutionalized elders?

For more information or to offer your comments and insight, please contact Chris Butler, timberlinelodge@comcast.net.

*Chris Butler is 1st Vice President of The Colorado Assisted Living Association (CALA) CALA was formed in 1982 just as assisted living was becoming more popular, something in between independent living and nursing homes. Most of our residents are private pay; however several are Medicaid. One of our goals is to provide as many Medicaid beds as possible.*

## MEET YOUR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Each month we will present a short introduction to one of the directors of the Senior Lobby:

**Mary Catherine Rabbitt, Esq.**, is a staff attorney at The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People and works under contract with the Colorado Department of Human Services as the Colorado Legal Assistance Developer under the Older Americans Act Program. In that position, she provides support, training, supervision and technical assistance to the legal assistance providers, ombudsmen and Area Agency on Aging Directors for the 16 Regions across Colorado. She has served in that position since June 2008.

Prior to that, she was an attorney with Colorado Legal Services for 16 years, specializing in health and elder law. She is a graduate of the University of Denver College of Law. In November, 2011, Ms. Rabbitt was inducted into the Elder Rights Advocacy Hall of Fame at the National Association of Legal Service Developers' Conference in Boston.

Thomas Jefferson quotes

The boisterous sea of liberty indeed is never without a wave.

The execution of the laws is more important than the making of them.

Above all things lose no occasion to exercising your dispositions to be grateful, to be generous, to be charitable, to be humane, to be true, just, firm, orderly, courageous, &c. Consider every act of this kind as an exercise which will strengthen your moral faculties & increase your worth.

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