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Elder Abuse Can Lead to Early Death

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A new study suggests that the risk of premature death among older adults who suffer abuse is more than double that of seniors who live free of ill treatment.

The study from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago was published in the August 5, 2009 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The Rush University study was in-depth. Researchers analyzed records for 9,318 seniors 65 years of age and older, enrolled between 1993 and 2005 in the Chicago Health and Aging Project, a study of a community-dwelling population. Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews to assess participants' health histories, physical fitness, cognitive abilities, health behaviors and psychosocial behaviors.

Elder Abuse

- According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, elder abuse can take many forms.
- Physical abuse: using physical force to injure or threaten a vulnerable senior.
- Emotional abuse: verbal assaults, threats, emotional isolation or rejection, demeaning acts or statements causing mental anguish or distress to an elder.
- Sexual abuse: sexual contact with a vulnerable senior, including those unable to grant consent. The contact can be the result of force, deception, threats or other coercion.
- Financial exploitation: includes theft and fraud, the misuse of authority, exploiting undue influence over a vulnerable person in order to gain control of the elder's money or property.
- Neglect: the failure or refusal of a caregiver to provide for a vulnerable senior's physical needs, emotional needs or safety.
- Abandonment: the desertion by a caregiver of a frail or otherwise vulnerable elder.
- Self-neglect: when a senior is unable to understand the consequences of their own actions or inaction, which can or does lead to endangerment or harm.

Elder Abuse in Nursing Homes

In too many cases, elder abuse takes place in nursing homes. The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates at least one in 20 nursing home residents has been victimized by abuse or neglect.

According to the best research on the topic, elder abuse is widespread. An estimated one to two million Americans aged 65 years or older has been injured, exploited or otherwise harmed by someone they counted on for care or safety.

Dr. XinQi Dong, researcher and geriatrician at Rush University Medical Center and the Rush University study's lead author said, "With the rapidly growing aged population in this country, problems of elder abuse will likely become even more pervasive, affecting our family, friends and loved ones."

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that nursing home neglect

played a role in nearly 14,000 nursing home patients' deaths between 1999 and 2002.

Signs of Nursing Home Abuse

The Elder Foundation says there are warning signs of elder abuse to look for when you visit your loved one.

- Cuts, bruises, burns, a sprain or fracture that the nursing home staff can't or won't explain satisfactorily
- Bedsores
- Unexplained sexually transmitted disease or genital infection; unexplained vaginal/anal bleeding; bloody/soiled underclothes
- Abrupt changes in behavior or mood
- Nursing home staff restricts visitations or refuses to allow visitors
- Staff won't allow visitors to be alone with the resident
- Nursing home resident appears to be kept in a state of over-medication
- Abrupt changes in the resident's will or other estate plans; large withdrawals from bank accounts

What to Do if Nursing Home Abuse is Suspected

If you suspect your loved one may be a victim of elder abuse in the nursing home where they live, the problems should immediately be brought to the nursing home staff's attention. Make sure your concerns are documented and that the staff acts promptly to correct the problems. If problems persist, or if new problems arise, contact an attorney who can advise you of the protections the law affords you and your loved one.

Bucket Brigade!

A NEW PROGRAM initiated by Merrymeeting Bay TRIAD will provide local senior citizens with free buckets of sand delivered to their homes to help prevent slips and falls. Pictured are, from left, Brunswick Community Policing Officer Terry Goan, Brunswick Police Chief Richard Rizzo, Home Depot store manager Phil Parker, Bath Police Officer Jaison Aucoin and Sagadahoc County Sheriff Joel Merry.

Bucket brigade aims to stem senior slips

Merrymeeting Bay TRIAD has initiated a new program to deliver free buckets of sand to older residents of Brunswick, Harpswell and all of Sagadahoc County.

The program is part of the organization's mission to keep the area's senior population safe within their own homes, according to Brunswick Community Policing Officer Terry Goan.

"We know a five-gallon bucket of sand is not a lot, but it is the hope of TRIAD that the sand would be used for stairs, walkways ... and other small areas that might get a lot of use," Goan said in an e-mail to The Times Record.

Buckets donated by Lowe's and The Home Depot have been distributed throughout the towns, and seniors or individuals with disabilities who request a bucket of sand can have it delivered to their home, according to Goan.

TRIAD hopes the project will accomplish two things:

"First, seniors will not have to worry about filling, their own buckets of sand then try to lift them into or out of a vehicle," Goan said. "Second, we hope the sand will give some reassurance that the seniors can still get out during the winter and not have to be afraid of falling in their own yard."

Residents should contact the following people in their community to request a bucket of sand:

Brunswick: Brunswick Community Policing Officer Terry Goan, 725-5521

Bath: Bath Police Officer Jaison Aucoin, 443-5563 extension212

Sagadahoc County except Bath: Sheriff Joel Merry 4438228

Harpswell: Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, 7741444

Ward 3 residents share tips, concerns

By Owen Boss

NORTHAMPTON - The impact of Sunday's fires on area residents was evident at a neighborhood meeting Monday night that drew a throng of more than 500 residents to College Church, many of whom said they fear for their families in the city they once felt so safe in.

The meeting, which was organized by the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association, allowed members of the local police and fire departments as well as Mayor Clare Higgins the opportunity to reassure residents that all of the city's resources are being used to track down whoever is responsible for the fires, and that the best way to prevent future incidents is to remain vigilant.

"I know that a lot of people came here tonight wanting to know answers about the crime itself and, unfortunately, that is the thing we are not going to be able to give people answers about tonight," Higgins said. "We're not really here tonight to solve the crime; we are here to talk about how we can pull together as a community."

Higgins also said she has heard many rumors circulating in the city concerning the fires, and she urged residents "not to pass rumors along, but pass them up," to members of the local police and fire departments, no matter how insignificant they may seem.

While addressing Higgins, Deputy Fire Chief Chris Norris and Police Capt. Joseph Koncas, Naomi Cairns choked back tears as she announced that she may have to leave her home on Highland Avenue out of fear for her life.

"I came home to my house burning down for the second time the other night, and it just breaks my heart," Cairns said.

Another resident speaking at the meeting was Robert Davis, who said he watched helplessly Sunday night as a vehicle exploded twice outside of his Franklin Street home.

"I could not believe what was happening because this is Northampton, this is our home, this is the Happy Valley and I want it to stay the Happy Valley," Davis said. "Right now we may be paranoid about what has happened to us but I think it is better to be paranoid and safe than to be in any other position."

Before Gerald Budgar, president of the Ward 3 Neighborhood Association, addressed the crowd, he asked that a moment of silence be held for Paul W. Yeskie Sr. and Paul W. Yeskie Jr., both of whom lost their lives in a fire set at their Fair Street home.

"We are gathered here at a most difficult time for Ward 3. We are upset shocked, angry, fearful, enraged, traumatized and everything in between," Budgar said, "because we feel the safety and security that has defined our wonderful community has been stolen from us."

However, Budgar said the hundreds of phone calls, emails and willingness to help he has received from community members since Sunday has illustrated just how strong the neighborhood feels about the crime and that it is the strength of the community that will get residents through this difficult time.

"We are Ward 3 and our city stands with us," he said. "Tonight, we begin the process of confronting what has happened to us by channeling our energy and concern into programs and projects that will be of lasting benefit to the community."

Among those initiatives, Budgar said, was a donation of 300 smoke detectors from the Hampshire County Sheriff's Office, residents looking to donate vehicles to those who lost their cars, and three \$1,000 donations, from the Northampton Rotary Club, the Three-County Fair Association, and an unnamed local resident, to add to the \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for setting the fires.

Another major theme at the meeting, raised by several residents, was the organization of a community crime watch that would enlist members of the neighborhood to keep an eye on the streets. Higgins said the city is considering this initiative and it is in the works.

Although many residents who spoke at the meeting applauded the fire department's response to the string of fires, Chris Karney, of 11 Hancock St., said the same firefighters told him a similar story six weeks ago when his Hancock Street home was set ablaze.

"The city told me that you would do everything in your power to prevent future fires. Apparently, everything in your power is not quite enough," Karney said.

Koncas offered residents tips about protecting their homes from future incidents, such as installing exterior motion detector lights, smoke detectors and cameras, and keeping car keys with alarm activation buttons on them near the bedside in case something unusual is spotted.

"I can assure you that the investigation is being vigorously pursued by members of the task force," Koncas said. "I know from our own perspective at the police department that our detectives, crime scene personnel and most of our patrol staff have been living on catnaps because they are committed to bringing this investigation to a successful conclusion. This is especially difficult thing for the Northampton Police Department, because this happened in our city and it is a personal affront to us and we are doing our best."

Other precautions Koncas suggested include removing trash and debris from porches, leaving outside lights on, checking smoke detectors to make sure they are functioning properly, and locking front doors.

"I encourage you, if you have any information whatsoever, please, please, call it in to us," Koncas said. "The smallest detail could be the missing puzzle piece that brings this investigation to a successful conclusion."

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Chuck Joseph: Volunteering is a reward unto itself

ROSIE LAGENFELD For Lifestyles |

Even though Charles (Chuck) Joseph retired eight years ago and was employed for 30 years before that, he never completely stopped "working." He decided he wanted to spread his good fortune to others within by lending a helping hand.

His volunteering, however, isn't a recent endeavor. Joseph has been doing so for the past 30 years. His resume of active participation is long: assisting with others in his college and graduate years, helping out at his church, being involved with Boy Scouts and pitching in wherever else he was needed. Joseph is not only involved within his own community but continues to help in Minnesota, his former residence, as well as in Chicago.

Why such a long-standing commitment that covers such a wide geographic area? "It always makes you feel good! Volunteering is not only a benefit to yourself, but to others ... you get a high from accomplishing a task. It's such a joy to accomplish something...even if nobody knows of it," he said. Current volunteering projects for Joseph are many. He is active with TRIAD, a non-profit organization consisting of members from law enforcement, senior service agencies, and seniors

themselves whose focus is to keep senior citizens safe and well. Joseph came to TRIAD by way of a connection made by the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program with the Volunteer Center of Racine County. "When we moved here from the Twin Lakes area," he explained, "I got involved in RSVP, and this brought more opportunities to volunteer. This is how I found TRIAD." On behalf of TRIAD, Joseph authored many senior safety and protection articles which appeared in the Lifestyles insert.

TRIAD and Joseph endorse the "File of Life" program. Seniors are given a health and medication form to complete and a plastic, sleeve-style, magnetized envelope. It is bright red and meant to be affixed to the refrigerator. It gives emergency personnel fast patient information. A small purse-sized version is also included.

Joseph is passionate about senior transportation issues. He worked diligently to get a nominal-fee senior shuttle in Burlington. That service began in December. He also works with the Racine County Traffic Safety Commission "It just makes me feel cheerful to see something that's made a difference in someone's life. That's very gratifying for me," said Joseph.

In his spare time, Joseph and his wife enjoy swing and ballroom dancing, traveling and spending time with family. The most unusual volunteer opportunity the couple shared was when they taught a computer class on a cruise for a month.

Are there benefits to volunteering? "Yes, definitely! You can always find an activity that matches your skill set. It's being able to start a project and see it function within the community. It's sitting back and enjoying the results - feeling satisfied that you've made a difference ... I encourage everyone to volunteer because it's so rewarding!"

Looking for a new challenge? Interested in enriching the lives of others as Chuck Joseph has? Stop by the Volunteer Center of Racine County, 6216 Washington Ave., Suite G, at the corner of Washington Avenue and Emmertsen Road. Browse through more than 500 volunteer opportunities. The center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or by appointment. Visit the center's Web site at <http://www.volunteercenterofracine.org> or call (262) 886-9612.

Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan promotes several employees

NAUGATUCK - The Board of Directors of Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan has promoted several employees for their dedication and excellence.

Debbie Massicotte began her career as a teller with Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan in December 1988. Ms. Massicotte was promoted to head teller, then loan processor. In 2002, she was named installment loan manager. Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan's former assistant secretary has devoted 21 years of service to the bank and has now been named assistant vice president. Ms. Massicotte volunteers for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and the Naugatuck Chamber of Commerce Duck Race.

Kathleen Katrenya has been involved in banking for 27 years, with 10 years in bank management. Ms. Katrenya began her career at Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan in 2006 as branch manager of the Southford office. In 2007, she was promoted to assistant secretary/branch manager, then went on to open Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan's Heritage Village office in June 2008, where she retained her titles of assistant secretary and branch manager. In January 2009, Ms. Katrenya was promoted to regional manager, and most recently, in October 2009, she was named assistant vice president and regional manager.

Sonia Myers is a 1998 graduate of Naugatuck High School who received an associate's degree in finance in 2003 from Naugatuck Valley Community College. In March 2000, Ms. Myers was hired by Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan as a full-time teller, and was promoted to customer service representative. She went on to become assistant branch manager of the Seymour office; was promoted to bank manager of the New Haven Road office in 2006; and, as of January of this year, is regional manager. Ms. Myers has now been named assistant vice president. She is co-treasurer for the Naugatuck Merchant's Association and co-chair of the 11th annual Community Care Day for the

United Way of Naugatuck and Beacon Falls.

Ann Marino received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Connecticut. Prior to her four-year association with Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan, Ms. Marino was vice president/residential and consumer loan manager with North American Bank. Naugatuck Valley Savings and Loan has named her vice president of residential lending/reverse mortgages. She is a member of the Women's Council of Realtors and earned a CSA designation (Society of Certified Senior Advisors). Additionally, Ms. Marino is a board member of the Children's Community School; a board member of the Naugatuck Triad, a partnership of seniors, town and businesses that promotes senior safety; and a volunteer with Jane Doe No More. Ms. Marino lives in Watertown with her husband, Charlie, and daughters, Kate and Jess.

Gift of Safety - Priceless!

Facts and Stats

- Elder Abuse/Exploitation: A serious public health problem, an estimated 13% of older adults in the U.S. experience abuse. Direct cost of financial exploitation alone is \$2.6 billion per year.
- Falls: 16,000 fatal falls each year is equivalent to a Boeing 767 airplane crashing every week for a year, killing all 300 people aboard. The direct cost of non-fatal falls today is \$19.2B per year; projected to be \$43.8B per year in 2020, which is more than the entire budget of U.S. Homeland Security.
- Medication/Transportation: About 1 in 5 older adults experience unintentional medication or alcohol misuse injuries per year. While the total cost was unavailable, there are significant implications for
- Medicare, Medicaid, insurance companies, and other payer sources!

Safety, like health and well being, is a priceless gift that tends not to be fully appreciated until such time as one's safety is compromised. Safety is not achieved by simply "wishing" for and wanting it. Safety is a need people have to be motivated to achieve. Maslow's Hierarchy is a great tool for encouraging and motivating people to proactively consider the importance of safety in their everyday lives.

We know that 'needs' and 'wants' can be similar but also quite different. For example, we have all heard an older adult make a statement such as "I want to remain independent and not be burden my children." In this statement, the word 'want' may be used by an older adult, but he or she really means "need." As you work with clients/patients, it is critical to understand their preferences and values, not simply hear the words they say. Words are often linked with motivations and signal opportunities to encourage behavior changes and tough decisions in order to maintain one's health, wellbeing and safety.

Through the gift of listening, we may identify safety issues that are important and encourage older adults to consider the gift of prevention. Therefore, it is important to discuss safety and provide guidance about risks related to aging that may compromise function and the ability to live independently. Threats to health, wellbeing and safety come from several sources. In addition to risks associated with physical illness, two of the most serious threats to safety include: Intentional injury or violence such as elder abuse and unintentional injury from accidents such as falls, medication and motor vehicle mishaps. Both categories are considered by the CDC to be significant health problems.

Safety-first thinking is not always a priority in daily life, regardless of age. The news provides evidence for this statement. Likewise, motivation to enhance safety does not necessarily translate into safety behaviors, but is considered an essential component of any plan for safeguarding older adults. Professionals understand the need to tap into knowledge gained over the years by helping older people tap into their own wisdom by adding practical, useful information to assist them in understanding the need to transform their knowledge into behaviors that reduce risk and enhance safety.

Knowledge is considered essential and professionals empower older adults to be powerful by taking

personal responsibility for applying knowledge to optimize their own health and wellbeing. The following illustrates the difference between knowledge and wisdom for the topic of safety:⁴

- Information: Useful in that it provides generic answers to 'who', 'what', 'where', and 'when' questions about safe aging.
- Knowledge: Is the application and personalization of information to address the 'how' (e.g., specific actions to enhance safety and minimize risks - elder abuse, falls, misuse of medication, transportation injuries).
- Understanding: Reflects an individual's appreciation of 'why' is it important to perceive safety risks as threats to health, wellbeing, independence and quality of life.
- Wisdom: Is evaluated understanding and includes the motivation to adopt attitudes and behaviors that promote safe aging versus simply 'wishing' to remain safe. Safety is a priceless gift wise older adults have power to give themselves!

Recommended Resources - Evelyn's Picks

- National Resource Center for Safe Aging: A collaborative effort funded by the CDC. They provide safety information useful for health professionals working with older adults.
www.safeaging.org/
- Center for Aging with Dignity: <http://nursing.uc.edu/centers/cfawd/default.aspx>

New Caregiver Video and Resource Guide Now Available

We want to call your attention to a new video and resource guide featured on Ask Medicare (www.medicare.gov/caregivers). The video tells one family's story, and highlights programs and resources that benefit and enhance a caregiver's well-being. In addition, the video and resource guide provide links to services available for caregivers and care recipients through the HHS Administration on Aging, HHS Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and other state and local programs. To view the video and download the resource guide, go to the Ask Medicare site and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Or simply click her for the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZa5m9kd_z4 and here for the Resource Guide: www.medicare.gov/caregivers/pdfs/Resource_and_Benefits_for_Caregivers.pdf

Ask Medicare is CMS' website for caregivers. It is as easy as logging onto www.medicare.gov/caregivers to help a friend or family member choose a drug plan, compare nursing homes, get help with billing, find local resources, and more!

More Senior Safety related articles are located at www.nationaltriad.org; e-news section.

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