

District of Columbia
Commission on Aging

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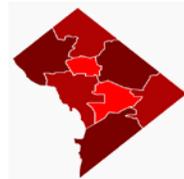
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November/December 2010



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SPECIAL ALERT

The Facts about the DC Smart Grid/Meter

PEPCO has begun installing a new type of electric “smart meter” at the premises of every electric customer in the city. All of the new meters should be installed by the end of 2011. The new meter will continue to bill your usage on a monthly basis. Most consumers should not see any change in the format of your electric bill. New rates for the smart grid will be implemented in 2013.

What is the Smart Grid?

A two way communications network that allows consumers to have greater control over their energy usage and enables PEPCO to measure consumption on an hourly basis, monitor the status of your service connection and communicate with remote devices in the network.

What is in it for the average consumer?

The Smart Grid may one day offer consumer’s greater ability to control their energy usage. Future capabilities:

- Actual meter readings instead of estimated readings
- The ability to choose a pricing plan that fits your usage
- Detailed information about your energy usage
- The ability to program your smart thermostat to adjust its usage in response to changes in the price of electricity
- The ability to remotely control your heating and air conditioning system
- The ability to know current bill at any given time

The Office of the People’s Counsel Staff is available to speak with your community group, tenant association, or meeting group regarding a variety of consumer utility issues including smart meters or other changes in services affecting consumers. Please notify OPC early enough to schedule your event. For more information, please contact OPC at 202.727.3071, by email at ccceo@opc-dc.gov or visit www.opc-dc.gov.

No COLA increase for Social Security next year

The Social Security Administration said it announced recently that inflation has been too low since the last increase in 2009 to warrant an increase for 2011. The announcement marks only the second year without an increase. The absence of inflation will be of small comfort to many older Americans whose savings and home values still haven’t recovered from the recession. For many it is a little bit upsetting because our bills are going up and Social Security isn’t. The impact is especially hard on those for whom Social Security is their only source of income.

Stroke: Know the Symptoms, Save a Life (Maybe Even Your Own)

By Doree Damoulakis

The statistics are astounding; someone suffers from a stroke every 45 seconds in the U.S., with a stroke-related death occurring every 3.1 minutes. Even more staggeringly, the rate of first strokes in African Americans is almost double that of Caucasians, and strokes tend to occur earlier in life for African Americans. African American stroke survivors are also more likely to become disabled and experience difficulties with daily living and activities.

In 2007, Georgetown University launched its "Triumph Over Stroke Program," which aims to educate citizens about the signs and symptoms of stroke, while working with local hospitals so that they can become Primary Stroke Centers. The designation means that these hospitals can demonstrate that their care program can significantly improve outcomes for a stroke. Currently, Georgetown University Hospital, Washington Hospital Center and George Washington University Hospital are the only certified centers in the District.

As members of the DC community, we are fortunate to have these resources within our reach, but the most effective way to reduce the burden of stroke is by recognizing the signs and symptoms and acting fast. With stroke, every second counts, but unfortunately far too few can correctly identify symptoms of a stroke, which include: sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding, sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination and/or sudden, severe headache with no known cause. A person experiencing a stroke can experience one or more of these symptoms, and on either the right, left or both sides of the body.

By calling 911 at the onset of symptoms, EMS teams are able to get patients to a Primary Stroke Center in time to reduce the burden of a stroke, however, it's up to us to be able to recognize the symptoms and call 911. We have the resources, and by taking the appropriate actions we can all live healthier and happier lives.

Doree Damoulakis, Research Coordinator, Triumph Over Stroke Project
Georgetown University, (Phone) 202.687.4320, (Cell) 917.547.9469

COMMISSION HEAD RECEIVES AWARD

On October 30, Jacqueline Arguelles, received the DC Consumer Advocate at the Annual Federation of Civic Association Luncheon for her many years of working with the Office of People's Counsel on consumer issues. She is the Ward 1 representative and current chairperson on the DC Commission on Aging. She has been active voice for utility consumers, providing public testimony on utility rates and service.

SPECIAL EVENTS

November is National Caregivers Month

Family Caregivers Forum

Saturday, November 13, 2010

9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Providence Hospital, St. Catharine's Hall

10th & Varnum Streets, NE, Washington, D. C.

Hosted by

**The Washington, D. C. Chapter of the Links, Inc. in partnership with
Office on Aging and others**

Door prizes, free AARP memberships; relaxation techniques and therapies;
panel discussions; complimentary breakfast and lunch; free oral/dental
screenings; exhibits.

Annual "A Feast of Sharing" – Thanksgiving Luncheon

Sponsored by Salvation Army, Safeway and Sun Trust

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

Washington Convention Center

Hall D- 801 Mt. Vernon Place NW, Washington DC

9:30 am – 2:30 pm

All are welcome, NO RSVP required

Lunch, giveaways, information and assistance exhibitors,

D.C. Senior Citizens Holiday Celebration

Wednesday, December 8, 2010

DC Armory, 2001 East Capitol Street SE

Washington, D.C. 20003

10 am – 2 pm

202-724-5626 tickets required

**Door prizes, health screenings and immunizations, lunch,
information and assistance exhibitors, entertainment, hand
dancing.**

SPECIAL ALERT

GETTING READY FOR WELLNESS

Ward One Senior Wellness Center



Registration is now open for the recently completed senior wellness center in Ward One . Programs are to begin operating in early 2011.

3531 Georgia Avenue N.W.
(202) 727-0338

Senior Wellness Centers promote healthy lifestyles among the District of Columbia's elderly population (persons 60 years and older) by developing, expanding, and strengthening health promotion initiatives in nutrition, medications and physical fitness. The center is designed to add years to the lives of seniors as well as life to their years.

Some of the building features will include:

- Nutrition Counseling and teaching classrooms
- Intake Room
- Health Education Seminar Rooms
- Exercise and Fitness Area
- Massage Room
- Computer Training Center
- Multipurpose Rooms for health, wellness and social activities
- Roof top terrace with trail path

HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE PARK

SENIOR CITIZEN'S TRAIL HIKING AND WALKING CLUB
EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

Sponsored by East River Family Strengthening Collaborative

NATIONAL ARBORETEUM

The National Arboretum is located off (1800 block) Bladensburg Road and New York Avenue N.E. Follow Bladensburg Road to R Street (near U HAUL Renting) to R Street.

Make a turn on R Street and continue 2 blocks to the Arboretum gates.

Walk at 9 AM

HEALTH

DC Department of Health Reminds Residents to Get Vaccinated Against the Flu

(Washington, DC) – The DC Department of Health (DOH) reminds all residents that, October was the official start of flu season. Every year over 200,000 people are hospitalized in the United States due to complications from the flu. The only way to be fully protected is to get the seasonal flu vaccine at the start of the new flu season. This year's flu vaccine will protect against several different strains of flu including H3N2, an influenza B virus, and the H1N1 virus.

This year the flu vaccine is recommended for everyone over the age of 6 months to protect against influenza viruses that are predicted to cause the most illness during the flu season. Residents seeking the vaccine are encouraged to contact their primary care physician and can also find the vaccine at some local pharmacies or grocery stores. As a part of the District's immunization efforts, DOH will continue to offer flu vaccines via its Immunization Program clinic located at 6323 Georgia Ave. NW Suite 305. Immunization services will be provided on Mondays and Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm for District residents only who are underinsured and un-insured.

For more information visit <http://www.flu.gov/>, or to locate local pharmacies and grocery stores carrying the flu vaccine, visit <http://www.flu.gov/widgets/vaccinefinder.html>.

Free HIV Testing at DMV Penn Branch Office

Washington, DC – Started in October District Government and Family and Medical Counseling Service supported by Gilead Sciences are offering free HIV testing at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Penn Branch Office at 3220 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

The tests, and delivery of test results, will be conducted in a confidential space at the office during the customers' visit for DMV services. Persons who choose to take the test will receive a \$ money order. Family and Medical Counseling Services will make sure that any person who tests positive gets an appointment for a full medical evaluation. The confidential results will only be disclosed to the person who was tested.

HELP FOR THOSE WHO NEED THE TEST

If you have friends (male or female) over 50, let them know that Howard University Hospital is giving free colonoscopies to people over 50. That exam is usually about \$1200. To make an appointment, call 202-865-7741.

HOLIDAY HELP

November 18, 2010

Hillcrest Senior Basket Drive

Hillcrest Recreation Center, 3100 Denver Street, SE, Time: 9am - 2pm

Hillcrest seniors will be collecting non perishable foods to create baskets for the families in the Hillcrest Community. For more information, call (202)645-9200.

November 18, 2010

Intergenerational Thanksgiving Feast , Ages: 5 - 99

Lamond Recreation Center, 20 Tuckerman Street, NE, Time: 5 pm - 8pm

The youth, adults and senior participants will celebrate together and enjoy a Thanksgiving dinner, listen to music and dance. For more information, call Kim Campbell at (202) 576-9541.

November 23, 2010

Deanwood Thanksgiving Community Feast, All Ages

Deanwood Community Center, 1350 49th Street, NE, Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm

"A Celebration of Thanks: This event will service the Deanwood Community Family. Participants will come out and enjoy an evening of family, food and fun." For more information, call Orvin Wright, Site Manager at (202) 671-3077.

November 23, 2010

Kennedy Social Activity Day for Seniors Ages: 55 and up

Kennedy Recreation Center, 1401 7th Street, NW, Time: 1pm - 3pm

Seniors will engage in a number of Bingo games and activities. PRIZES! For more information, call Sorrell Greene at (202) 671-4794.

Donate and/or volunteer with Nonprofits for the Holidays

Capital Area Food Bank, 202-526-5344, 646 Taylor Street NE

Feeds the hungry in the Washington metropolitan area through a network of feeding programs.

DC Central Kitchen, 202-234-0707, 425 2nd Street NW

Safely recovers unserved food from food service businesses to feed children and adults at social service agencies throughout the metro DC area.

Food and Friends, 202-269-2277, 219 Riggs Road NE

Prepares, packages, and delivers meals and groceries to more than 1,100 people living with HIV/AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses, such as breast and lung cancer.

Martha's Table, Inc, 202-328-6608, 2114 14th Street NW

Provides nutritious meals and supervised learning and literacy activities to low-income and homeless children, families, and individuals.

Miriam's Kitchen, 202-452-8926, 2401 Virginia Avenue NW

Serves a hot, nutritious breakfast each weekday morning to 150 men and women.

Salvation Army DC Metro Area, 202-269-6333, 2100 New York Avenue NE

Offers homeless feeding programs.

Bread for the Soul, 202-421-8608

Holiday food baskets for families impacted by HIV

MEDICARE PREMIUMS, DEDUCTIBLES FOR 2011

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has set the Medicare premiums, deductibles and coinsurance amounts to be paid by Medicare beneficiaries in 2011. Medicare's open enrollment period starts 11/15/10 and runs through 12/31/10. During this time, Medicare recipients can make changes to their health and medication coverage plans. **Plan costs and coverage change each year, so all people with Medicare should check to make sure their plan still meets their needs and budget. There may be a Medicare health or drug plan available with better coverage or a lower deductible in 2011.**

For Medicare Part A, which pays for inpatient hospital, skilled nursing facility, and some home health care, the deductible paid by the beneficiary when admitted as a hospital inpatient will be \$1,132 in 2011, an increase of \$32 from this year's \$1,100 deductible. The Part A deductible is the beneficiary's cost for up to 60 days of Medicare-covered inpatient hospital care in a benefit period. Beneficiaries must pay an additional \$283 per day for days 61 through 90 in 2011, and \$566 per day for hospital stays beyond the 90th day in a benefit period. For beneficiaries in skilled nursing facilities, the daily co-insurance for days 21 through 100 in a benefit period will be \$141.50 in 2011, compared to \$137.50 in 2010. Those who enroll in Medicare Advantage (M.A.) plans may have different cost-sharing arrangements.

The monthly premium paid by beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Part B covers a portion of the cost of physicians' services, outpatient hospital services, certain home health services, durable medical equipment, and other items. The standard Medicare Part B monthly premium will be \$115.40 in 2011, a \$4.90 increase (or 4.4-percent) over the 2010 premium. However, the majority of Medicare beneficiaries will continue to pay the same \$96.40 premium amount they have paid since 2008.

George Washington Senior Health Insurance Project (SHIP) provide free counseling to seniors about Medicare, Medicaid, and long-term care insurance. They can be reached at 202-739-0668. They are also available for community presentations.

• Fast Facts for Washington D.C. in 2011

- • 33 Medicare Prescription Drug Plans (PDPs) available
- • 96% of people with Part D can pay a lower premium in 2011 than they did in 2010
- • 100% of people with Medicare have access to a MA plan for a \$0 premium
- • \$14.80 is the lowest monthly premium for a PDP
- • \$44.70 is the lowest monthly premium for a PDP with any generic coverage in the Coverage Gap
- • 12 PDPs have a premium of \$0 for people who qualify for Extra Help

VA Backs Home Loans

WASHINGTON – With mortgage rates at historic lows, Veterans and military personnel continue to use the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) home loan program in record numbers to purchase a home or refinance their existing loans. VA's loan specialists can intervene on a Veteran's behalf with the loan servicer to explore home-retention options, including repayment plans, loan modifications, and forbearance. When home retention is not an option, VA can help arrange a compromise sale or a deed-in-lieu of foreclosure, both of which are less detrimental to borrowers than foreclosure. More information about VA's Home Loan program is available online at www.homeloans.va.gov or by calling toll-free at 1-877-827-3702.

Funding will support caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease

HHS Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee announced recently more than \$10 million in grants to help families address the challenges of providing care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

"Caregivers want to keep their family members at home for as long as possible, and we are helping them do that by expanding the use of proven models and demonstrating new approaches that will help these families succeed," said Assistant Secretary Greenlee. "These grants will embed good practices regarding dementia into state long-term services and support systems and improve support for families caring for loved ones with dementia."

As many as 2.4 million to 5.1 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The population age 65 and older is growing rapidly and is expected to double by 2050, according to the United States Census Bureau. Since the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias rises progressively with age, an increasing number of persons and families will need access to services and supports to help them cope with these diseases. The District of Columbia received a total of \$256, 146 dollars.

Get your free copy of Iona's new 2010 Resource Guide.

This valuable resource contains information about DC metro area adult day services, home care agencies, mental health providers, legal resources, and more. For more information, or to receive your free copy, contact us at 202-895-9448 or info@iona.org.

SPECIAL EVENT

**IONA and Seabury Care Management cordially invite you to
attend a reception for**

Dr. Barbara Soniat and Monica Melady Micklos, MSW

authors of

**Empowering Social Workers for Practice
with Vulnerable Older Adults**

Celebrate the publication of this ground-breaking book on the capacity-
risk model for working with vulnerable older adults who are at risk
and reluctant to accept help

Meet and share your experiences with other professionals in the field.

Thursday, November 18, 2010

5 - 7 pm

Iona Senior Services, 4125 Albemarle Street, NW

One block from the Tenleytown metro; limited parking available.

**Copies of the book will be available for autographing. \$32 cash
or check.**

RSVP to Nina Austin (202) 895-9479 by Tuesday, November 16.

Join AARP DC for Coffee Talk

with

Denise Rolark Barnes, AARP D.C. President
and Louis Davis Jr., AARP D.C. Senior State Director

Special Guests

Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser

Ward 4 Residents

Saturday, November 13, 2010 9 -10 a.m.

Oromo Center

811 Upshur St. NW

Washington, D.C. 20011

Come together, as neighbors interested in bettering our community.

Talk health care reform, affordable housing, utilities.

Ask questions and share thoughts and concerns.

Listen to each other and find ways to achieve common goals.

Coffee and light refreshments will be served.

THE LEAD AGENCY FOR WARD 8 IS CHANGING TO:

- Access Housing Inc Senior Program

accesshousingincdc.org

The current program headquarters location will be changing soon.
The present sites and numbers are still operable for the time being.

2447 Good Hope Road SE
Washington DC 20020
202-610-6103

The current program sites and services that are managed by the lead agency will be maintained.

As lead agency, they are providing case management services for frail and vulnerable elderly, help with social services, recreation and socialization activities, congregate meal program sites and meals for the homebound, transportation for activities and medical appointments, special events, health/nutrition education and information and assistance to seniors 60 years+ and their caregivers residing living in Ward 8

East River Lead Agency Staff Moves

● East River Family Strengthening Collaborative (EFRSC) Ward 7 Lead Agency staff have completed the move to their new location at 3917 Minnesota Avenue NE. The phone/fax and internet numbers and addresses are the same. The new location is near the Minnesota Avenue Metro Station. As the Lead Agency, ERFSC is the point of contact for seniors living primarily in Ward 7. The organization provides counseling, outreach, advocacy, congregate meals, transportation, and a host of other services to seniors. The Project Director for this program, Lisa Bryant and her team have been relocated to the new location.

If you need assistance for seniors call (202) 534-4880 or visit www.erfsc.org.

OTHER LEAD AGENCIES BY WARDS

- BARNEY SENIOR PROGRAM (Wards 1 and 4) 202-939-9020
- EMMAUS SERVICES FOR THE AGING (Ward 2) 202-745-1200
- WEST RIVER FAMILY STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE (Ward 6) 202-608-1340
 - IONA SENIOR SERVICES (Ward 3) 202-966-1055
- SEABURY RESOURCES FOR THE AGING (Ward 5) 202-529-8701

SPECIAL ALERT

COLD ALERT RESPONSE FOR SENIORS

Once a cold or winter weather emergency has been given, seniors are urged to listen to the broadcast media about the weather conditions. Seniors are urged to follow certain protective measures including: staying in warm places; wearing several layers of dry clothing; wearing a windproof outer layer; heavy socks; boots or shoes with insulation and lining; a hat and mittens when outdoors; reschedule appointments if possible; taking a warm bath or shower; and drinking plenty of non-alcoholic liquids. In addition, seniors should keep the heat on, even if it is at a low level, to prevent pipes from freezing. The following are other helpful community resources to be utilized during the cold weather alert:

IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- **Emergency Assistance** **911**

In a life threatening situation contact for Police, Fire and ambulance services. There is a charge for DC ambulance transportation to health care facilities. Medicare Part A recipients can be reimbursed.

- **Hypothermia/Shelter Hotline** **(202) 399-7093 or (800) 535-7252**

The hotline offers assistance to persons in need of overnight shelter and support for those living in the streets. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

- **DC Consumer and Regulatory Affairs** **(202) 442-9557**

If the heating system is not working in your rental apartment building, notify the property management. If you do not receive a response, you may call the Housing Inspections Office for assistance during business hours.

- **DC Call Center** **(202) 311**

To report public streets that need snow and ice clearing, and removal. Also, the main number for DC. Residents to call to report a problem or violation, offer feedback to the Mayor, or obtain government information.

- **Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency** **(202) 727-6161**

This office can give you information about shelters, where to get blankets, heaters, and oil and who to contact for other assistance also for non medical emergency assistance and service information after hours, holidays and weekends. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **D.C. Energy Office Hotline** **(202) 673-6750**

The hotline is available Monday through Friday 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. and offers information and financial assistance with utilities.

SPECIAL ALERT

COLD ALERT RESPONSE FOR SENIORS: UTILITIES

UTILITY EMERGENCY REPAIR

- **PEPCO** (202) 833-7500

To report electrical power outage in your residence. Also, let them know if there are persons in your household with health problems.

- **Washington Gas** (703) 750-1400

To report gas leakage or outage in your residence. Also, let them know if there are persons in your household with health problems.

- **DC Water and Sewer Authority** (202) 612-3400

Call to report any water problems including bursting of pipes (24 hours a day)

- **Comcast Cable** (202) 635-5100

To report cable television outage.

EMERGENCY RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- **Yellow Pages** 411

If your heat goes out inside your private residence, check the yellow pages or call directory assistance for listing of heating contractors.

PREVENTING TERRORISM AND SAVING LIVES

Preventing terrorism is everybody's business. If you SEE something, SAY something. Call the Metropolitan Police Department at (202) 727-9099 to report suspicious activity or behavior that has already occurred. Call 911 to report in-progress threats or emergencies.

To learn more, visit <http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/operationtipp>.

Announcements

Eldercare Locator Gets an Upgrade

The Eldercare Locator—a free, public service that connects older adults and caregivers with resources in their community—is getting a makeover. The enhanced toll-free call center (800-677-1116) and redesigned website now offer a connection to live information specialists and access to extensive resources. NCOA has contributed information and expertise on government benefits counseling

MetroAccess Riders to Prepay by Phone, Online or Use Cash for Trips



Tokens, Paper Fare Cards Phasing Out Effective January 31, 2011

In an effort to simplify and save customers time in paying fares, Metro is encouraging its MetroAccess riders to use remaining tokens and paper fare cards before January 31, 2011, when they will be discontinued for use. The transition is being planned in preparation for new distance based fares that are being implemented on December 5, as part of the 2011 budget fare changes authorized earlier this year. Under the new fares, continued use of tokens and paper fare cards will add handling time to each trip.

While paper fare cards and tokens are being phased out, Metro is encouraging MetroAccess customers to prepay for trips by phone or online using a credit or debit card with MetroAccess EZ-Pay. SmartBenefits customers may also take advantage of MetroAccess EZ-Pay. Customers can receive step-by-step instructions on how to use EZ-Pay online, or they can call 301-562-5360 to request information. In addition to EZ-Pay, MetroAccess fares also may be paid in cash in the exact amount at boarding.

Starting December 5, MetroAccess fares will be based on the distance and time of day that a customer travels. The MetroAccess fare will be twice the amount of what the fare would cost on the fastest comparable trip if the same trip were taken on fixed-route services (Metrobus and Metrorail), up to a maximum fare of \$7.

MetroAccess customers will be informed of the exact fare that they are expected to pay for a trip when they book a trip online or with a MetroAccess reservations agent.

SENIORS SAFE AT HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

- You can help to keep seniors and others safe and avoid holiday fire damage if you follow these holiday fire safety tips:
 1. Install smoke detectors; change the batteries every year. Install carbon monoxide detectors and make sure those batteries are fresh too.
 2. If you use your fireplace, make sure to use a fireplace screen.
 3. Never burn wrapping paper, boxes or other trash in your fireplace.
 4. Don't leave a fire unattended; put the fire out before you go to bed.
 5. Candles are beautiful, but make sure they are in stable and secure holders and keep them away from combustible materials and small children. Never leave candles unattended.
 6. If you have a real Christmas tree, put it in a stable stand, and keep it fresh by checking the water level daily. A dried tree is more susceptible to fire. Keep the tree away from heat sources that could dry it out. Most trees dry out in two weeks, so don't leave your tree up long past the holidays.
 7. Check holiday lights for cracked or broken bulbs, frayed wires and loose plugs. Don't use lights that aren't safe.
 8. Use lights that have been approved by testing labs like Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).
 9. Use lights only in their designated areas; never use "indoor only" lights outdoors.
 10. If your smoke, fire, or carbon monoxide detectors go off, get everyone outside and call 911. Don't try to solve the problem yourself.
 11. Before senior friends and family come to visit for the holidays, take a look around the home and try to eliminate any tripping hazards like loose floor mats, shaky railings or stray phone and electrical cords.
 12. For older parents or relatives that don't have in home senior care, check to make sure that their utility bills are being paid on time. Lack of heat, electricity and water can be deadly in the winter in colder climates. Contact someone in the area, whether a neighbor or family friend, to shovel the front walk if it snows and put down rock salt if it is icy.
 13. When the power goes out locally, check on elderly neighbors to see that they are warm and dry. If not, suggest they come over for a visit where you can bundle them up in blankets and make sure they have something to eat.

COPING WITH THE HOLIDAY BLUES

The holiday season can be a time full of joy, cheer, parties and family gatherings. But for many people, it is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures and anxiety about an uncertain future.

Many factors can cause the “holiday blues”: stress, fatigue, unrealistic expectations, over-commercialization, financial constraints, and the inability to be with one’s family and friends. For many seniors who live alone, far from family and friends, empty nesters, it can cause a sense of isolation and uselessness. The demands of shopping, parties, family reunions and house guests also contribute to feelings of tension. People may also develop other stress responses such as headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating and difficulty sleeping. Even more people experience post-holiday let down after January 1. This can result from disappointments during the preceding months compounded by the excess fatigue and stress.

Coping with Stress & Depression During the Holidays

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Pace yourself. Organize your time. Make a list and prioritize the important activities.
- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Don’t put the entire focus on just one day (i.e., Thanksgiving Day). Remember that it’s a season of holiday sentiment, and activities can be spread out to lessen stress and increase enjoyment.
- Attend holiday celebrations for seniors. You may meet new friends and reconnect with old ones.
- Remember the holiday season does not banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely; there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.
- Leave “yesteryear” in the past and look toward the future. Life brings changes. Each season is different and can be enjoyed in its own way. Don’t set yourself up in comparing today with the “good ol’ days.”
- Do something for someone else. Try volunteering some of your time to help others.
- Enjoy activities that are free, such as taking a drive to look at holiday decorations, going window shopping or making a snowperson with children.
- Be aware that excessive drinking will only increase your feelings of depression.
- Try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a new way.
- Spend time with supportive and caring people. Reach out and make new friends, or contact someone you haven’t heard from in a while.
- Save time for yourself! Recharge your batteries! Let others share in the responsibility of planning activities.

DC COMMISSION WILL MEET IN THE NEW YEAR

DC Commission on Aging will not meet in November and December due to other planned activities. The next Commission on Aging meeting will be Wednesday, January 26, 2011.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMISSION ON AGING
441 Fourth Street, N.W., Suite 900 South
Washington, D.C. 20001