

Rural Healthy Aging Network

Volume 4

April 2008



Greetings!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an update on the activities of the Rural Healthy Aging Network (RHAN). If you have anything you would like to include in this newsletter, please send it to Joshua Byrd at jbyrd@hsc.wvu.edu.

WVU Dental Health Study

The West Virginia Center on Aging is conducting an NIH funded study that is looking to improve the dental health of older adults in West Virginia. Participants will receive a free dental exam, a free memory exam, and a gift card for up to \$60. If you are age 70 years or older and have four natural teeth, you may qualify to participate in our research study.

For additional information, call 1-866-566-1212

Monongalia County Fit & Strong!

Following the success of the Fit & Strong! program in McDowell County, Turner Goins applied for and received additional funding from the West Virginia University Bureau for Public Health's Osteoporosis and Arthritis Program to bring the Fit & Strong! program to Monongalia County.

Dr. Goins is working with Jennifer Adamson, the Director of The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute who has agreed to host the classes at their facility. There will be two 8-week sessions of Fit and Strong! each starting on April 21, 2008.

Recruitment is currently underway and we are expecting the classes to be full. We expect that

those participating in the program will experience positive physical and psychological benefits from this program, including decreased pain and stiffness.

Help Yourself!

Chronic Disease Self-Management

Sponsors: Marshall University Center for Rural Health & West Virginia University Rural Healthy Aging Network

Learn with other individuals with chronic disease how to best manage day-to-day treatment, and how to improve your quality of life. Course includes topics such as:

- **Problem Solving Skills**
- **Nutrition**
- **Physical Fitness**
- **Better Breathing**
- **Muscle Relaxation**
- **Depression Management**
- **& much more!**

This class is being offered as part of the OLLI Spring Semester curriculum. The program runs for 6 weeks. We will meet each Wednesday from 10:00-12:30 at the Mountaineer Mall in Morgantown. Classes begin **April 9, 2008** and run until **May 14, 2008**.

For more information contact:
Joshua Byrd
304-293-1796
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The class is also being offered in conjunction with the WV Bureau of Senior Services in Charleston, WV at the Kanawha Valley Senior Services center. Classes begin **April 8, 2008** and run until **May 13, 2008**.

For more information contact:
Deloris Wilder
304-558-3317 Ext. 19
dwilder@wvseniorservices.gov

CONFERENCE SAVE THE DATE!

**CDC Prevention Research Centers
Healthy Aging Research Network.
“Effective Programs to Treat Depression in
Older Adults: Implementation Strategies
for Community Agencies”**

Date: May 19-20, 2008

Location: Carter Presidential Center, Atlanta

What: A national conference for mental health and aging service providers, administrators, public health professionals, and policy makers interested or involved in the implementation of community- and evidence-based depression screening and management interventions for older adults across a range of depressive symptoms.

Scholarship and poster opportunities available.

**Stay tuned for more information:
www.prc-han.org**

April is National Humor Month



April is known for bringing showers and tax day, but laughter? Believe it or not, National humor month celebrates its 32nd anniversary this year. Larry Wilde, Director of the Carmel Institute of Humor founded this month long observation of humor back in 1976.¹ Starting with All Fool's Day at the beginning of the month, Mr. Wilde thought it was only fitting that April be the month to be reminded of how a little laughter can improve health and quality of life.

The role of humor in health even has some scientific merit. Researcher interest in the science of laughter was largely motivated by the work of Norman Cousins in *Anatomy of Illness*, where the author describes using laughter to help him manage his disease.² Since then, researchers have found laughter to be capable of reducing stress, managing pain, and improving both immune function and overall quality of life³ but further investigation is needed.⁴

No matter what, we can't argue that laughter makes us feel good. So, despite the dreary days and April showers, don't forget to tickle your funny bone in honor of National Humor Month!

¹ <http://www.larrywilde.com/month.htm>

² Cousins, N. *Anatomy of an Illness*. Norton, 1979.

³ Bennett, MP, Lengacher, CA. Humor and Laughter may Influence Health. I. History and Background. *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*. 2006 March; 3(1): 61-63.

⁴ Martin, RA. Humor, laughter, and physical health: methodological issues and research findings. *Psychol Bull*. 2001 Jul;127(4):504-19

Rural Built Environment Literature Review

We are pleased to announce that the submission inquiry for the Rural Built Environment Review to the American Journal of Health Promotion has been approved. This review has highlighted the current state of research regarding physical activity and the built environment among rural adults. Findings from the 19 studies included indicated research in this area is limited. Pleasant aesthetics and presence of trails demonstrated consistent associations with increased physical activity among rural adults. A less consistent pattern of association was evident for feelings of safety/low levels of crime and light traffic. When these findings were compared to similar research focused on urban areas, the built environment elements that were consistently associated with PA differed. The review also, determined that the definition of rural employed in a study is not consistently reported. Geographic regions studied included samples from eight states and Canada along with two national studies. Study samples to date have also largely included middle age adults with few exclusively focused on older adults. Lastly, the review demonstrated that a limited number of studies have assessed the influence of the rural built environment on PA using direct measures of the environment.

This month Ms. Frost and Dr. Goins will be submitting the manuscript coauthored by Ms. Hunter and Drs. Hooker, Bryant, Kruger, and Pluto. Much thanks goes to Dr. Sharkey and other members of the RHAN group for their valued input and contributions to the paper.

Alzheimer's Association Thanks for the Memories Luncheon

The Alzheimer's Association, WV Chapter will host the annual Thanks for the Memories Luncheon at the Charleston Marriott on May 16 2008. The Rockefeller Award will be presented to Dr. Shirley Neitch of Huntington and Kenneth and Brenda Haydon of Nitro.

Dr. Neitch is Professor of Medicine and Chief of the Section of Geriatrics at Marshall University. She serves as director of the Hanshaw Geriatric Center/Susan Edwards Drake Alzheimer's Care Center in Huntington. Dr. Neitch developed the first driving assessment program for seniors at the Hanshaw Geriatric Center. She has been a strong supporter of our organization, participated in the Huntington Memory Walk and worked with us on several projects.

Kenneth Haydon was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's at the age of 52. He and Brenda have been active with our Association for many years, speaking about their feelings and the needs of both caregivers and those with the disease. You may recall his artwork on our 2007 calendar we distributed to WV legislators. They have assisted in starting our first Early Stage Support Group, taken active roles in our advocacy efforts and participated in Memory Walk. They were featured in a Newsweek magazine article last year as well. In addition, we are honored to announce that national Alzheimer's Association CEO Harry Johns will be the guest speaker for this year's luncheon.

We hope you will join us in making the Thanks for the Memories Luncheon bigger and better this year. The event is scheduled to be held on May 16, 2008 at the Charleston Marriott at 11:45am.

For more information log on to www.alz.org/wv or call the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800 491-2717.



WVRHEP – Winding Roads Health Consortium

The WV Geriatric Education Center was recently funded under Title VII in the federal budget. After a year of non-funding we will have the opportunity to continue building on the foundation of the Mountain State GEC.

The grant goals are:

- Build geriatric education capital to strengthen the infrastructure for geriatrics education in West Virginia.
- Build a stable and competent workforce for the provision of geriatric health care and increase the geriatrics competence of health professions faculty and students.
- Promote evidence-based interventions to improve care of older adults.

Each of the individual consortiums funded under the Federal Grant also have specific goals in addressing their communities, health professions students and field faculty needs. One example is Winding Roads which covers Roane, Jackson, and Clay Counties:

1. Work directly with the staff of the WV GEC in implementing the goals and objectives of the project. Specifically, as a rural health training site, WRHC will work with the WV GEC to build a stable and competent workforce for the provision of geriatric healthcare and increase the geriatrics competence of health care professions faculty, medical resident, and students.

2. Work with WV GEC campus based and rural teaching faculty to develop competency based criteria for completion of geriatrics rotations with activities and teaching strategies to address each competency.
3. Develop and coordinate an annual geriatric focused health fair in each of our three counties (Roane, Jackson, and Clay). This will provide an opportunity for an interdisciplinary student team to focus on geriatric cultural competency.
4. Present four (4) Geriatric focused Interdisciplinary Experiences (IDE) involving students, health care practitioners, and older adults. The inclusion of older adults may focus on health states, resources available to seniors, social issues, etc.
5. Identify clinical resources and learning opportunities for the development of an institutionally approved "Geriatrics Rotation" for health professions' students. A minimum of two geriatrics focused rotations will be implemented as required in the grant in years two and three. Should WRHC be prepared to implement these rotations in year one, they will do so.
6. Develop a minimum of one geriatrics focused service-learning project that is replicable in other rural training sites.
7. To support a minimum of two field faculty annually to participate in the Advanced Geriatric Educators Skills (AGES) certification program and work toward AGES certification.
8. Utilize and distribute to appropriate rural teaching faculty, resources developed by the WV GEC and those developed by the previous Mountain State Geriatric Education Center.

The point here is that WV will continue to educate and prepare our health professions students and rural practitioners to be culturally competent in the area of geriatrics and be better prepared in addressing the health care needs of our growing population of older adults.

fitness



Take Control – An Arthritis Exercise Program

The Ohio River Valley Chapter of the National Arthritis Foundation, the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health and the West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services partnered to provide instructor training to lead exercises utilizing the National Arthritis Foundation curriculum. The program "Take Control with Knowledge" is a recreational exercise program designed to improve the range of motion, strength and endurance for individuals diagnosed with one of the many forms of arthritis. The program was held April 4, 2008 at the Bureau of Seniors Services in Charleston, West Virginia. Twenty-three individuals attended the training from a range of organizations, i.e., senior services county aging programs, WVU Center on Aging, UMW and local county health departments.

Deloris Wilder, Senior Services Specialist served as trainer for the program. The new instructors have committed to teach a six-week class that meets twice a week in their local community or organization within the next year.

