MEDICARE TURNS FIFTY - AND IS DOING WELL

By Ed Foglia, District 2 Director

Medicare is well-managed, working for millions of seniors, and is celebrating its 50th birthday! Regardless of the constant attacks by critics, the latest research shows that this federal government, single-payer medical plan for seniors is a sound investment for America.

World-renowned cardiologist Dr. Harlan Krumholz published the results of a five-year study on Medicare coverage which demonstrated a dramatic drop in deaths and Medicare costs. According to Krumholz, “It’s jaw dropping finding. We didn’t expect to see such a remarkable improvement over time.” The objective of the study was to track the trends in mortality, hospitalizations and expenditures in the Medicare fee-for-service population between 1999 and 2013.

The study included the medical records of over 68 million Medicare patients who are in traditional fee-for-service or Medicare Advantage programs. This scientific study did not include patients in Managed Care programs which account for 29% of the people covered under Medicare.

Hospitalization rates fell 24% from 2009 to 2013, and patients were 45% less likely to die within a month and 22% less likely within a year following hospitalization. According to Krumholz, this is a result of making sure that hospitals are safer, and that treatments are more timely and effective. Hospitals and staff have been instrumental in the dramatic improvement in patient care and survival. Newer drugs and medical care also are contributing to longer life. Additionally, there has been almost a 15% drop in Medicare costs per patient at a time when our country is spending more on health care.

The Affordable Care Act has had a dramatic impact on Medicare coverage. Medicare now covers many preventative services and seniors can get a free yearly “wellness” visit. On Medicare's 50th birthday in 2015, the program is healthy, working well, and is an important investment for America.

Medicare now covers many preventative services and seniors can get a free yearly “wellness” visit.

Friendly Reminder! If you are a Pre-Retired member who has retired this year, please let CTA Membership know in order to change your active status to retired. Email membership@cta.org or call 650-552-5278.

Alen Ritchie
PRESIDENT
CTA/NEA-Retired
Just as in the movie when sharks join tornados to destroy Miami, the NEA Student Teacher Program and NEA-Retired joined together to attack a major problem in Osceola County, FL - the health of elementary school students. About half the 200 education volunteers with me were members of NEA-Retired! Many others flowed from the local community health and safety support groups.

On June 30, estimated 400 students from six different elementary school Summer Activity Programs converged upon Osceola High School with water bottles in-hand weathering the Florida heat and humidity. There were 20 activity stations for them to enjoy. Mounted Search and Rescue teams gave horseback rides, a health club had kids Zumba-ing for prizes, and, in my booth kids pedaled a bike-adapted, healthy smoothie blender to mix their own yogurt smoothie! During lunch, NEA Student Teachers asked me a lot of questions about how to be strong as a first year teacher, and stand up to those dictating their craft or criticizing their profession. I overheard many similar conversations in the lunchroom. Kudos to the local NEA Student Teacher Program for uniting with NEA members to provide a wonderful program for students!
NEA-RETIRED DELEGATES MEET IN ORLANDO

By Marc Sternberger, Vice President

NEA-Representative Assembly

Sixteen CTA/NEA-Retired delegates were among the roughly 8,000 attending the 94th NEA Representative Assembly held July 1-6 in Orlando. NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia opened the NEA’s 153rd Annual Meeting with a keynote focused on this year’s theme “Unite, Inspire, Lead.”

This year, much of the meeting, speeches, and many of the New Business Items (NBIs) and Resolutions centered on Human and Civil Rights impacting American Society in general and Public Education in particular. NBIs were emotionally discussed and approved while addressing institutional racism, supporting the “Black Lives Matter” movement and reaffirming that “NEA shall lead in fighting inequity, racism and educational injustice.” NBIs addressing the effects of income inequality and tax fairness on students were passed as were those reasserting NEA’s position that “affordable, comprehensive health care, including prescription drug coverage, is the right of every person.”

Several NBIs specific to retirees/retirement were approved, including NEA Publishing articles detailing the economic value of Defined Benefit vs. Defined Contribution pensions while advocating for them. A related Legislative Amendment, opposing mandatory defined contribution pension plans, was also approved. Additionally, the assembly approved NEA’s funding of state staff to attend NEA-Retired’s Organizing Conference. The latter was passed after it was noted that “NEA-Retired is the fastest growing affiliate of NEA.”

Thanks to CTA/NEA-Retired volunteers, Adeline Blasingame, Roslyn Jones and Harris Kight-Moore, who served as microphone monitors during the Representative Assembly.

CTA/NEA-Retired President Alen Ritchie thanked the delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL for electing him to serve on the NEA-Retired Executive Council.

At the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting our newsletter the CTA/NEA-Retired Retiree Advocate was awarded First Place for an Established State Newsletter. Newsletter Editor Bonnie Shatun (center) accepted the award for the Association. Presenting it to her are Executive Council Member Jean Dobashi (left) and President Tom Curran (right).

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN FOR THE 2015-16 ELLEN LOGUE WHO (WE HONOR OURS) AWARD

Annually, CTA/NEA-Retired honors one member who has continued to be active in their retirement by exhibiting leadership in the Association, in public education and in the community. The recipient will be recognized at our annual CTA/NEA-Retired Issues Conference to be held on March 3-4 in Torrance, CA. Past winners of the award are:

- 2015 - Bonnie Shatun
- 2014 - Val Muchowski
- 2013 - Orval Garrison
- 2012 - Tim Jenkins

Nomination forms can be found online at www.cta.org/retired. If you would prefer to receive the form in the mail, please call CTA/NEA-Retired at 650/552.5561 or email CTA-Retired@cta.org.

The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting began with the three NEA officers discussing “Vision of the Future of NEA-Retired.” Pictured from left are NEA Retired President Tom Curran, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, NEA Vice President Becky Pringle and NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss.
The recent wild fires remind us just how vulnerable we are to natural disasters in California. As an annual or lifetime member of CTA/NEA-Retired, you are eligible to receive financial assistance if you suffer significant losses due to fire, earthquake, flood or other natural disaster beyond what is covered by insurance.

The four types of grants are:

- **Standard Grant**: CTA/NEA-Retired members may receive up to $1,500 for significant economic hardship related to damage to their primary residence, displacement or disruption of required utilities.
- **Catastrophic Damage Grant**: Recipients of the Standard Grant may be eligible for up to another $1,500 if damages exceed $50,000.
- **Temporary Displacement Grant**: A grant of up to $500 may be available for members who are displaced from their primary residence as the result of a disaster, but do not meet the requirement for a Standard Grant.
- **School Site Grant**: Members may receive up to $500 for damage to or loss of personal property in the classroom. This would be helpful to members who may substitute after retiring or work at a school in another capacity.

Interested members may contact their local office, the nearest Regional Resource Center, or www.cta.org for more information or a claim form.

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By Bonnie Shatun, District 3 Director

CTA/NEA-Retired Members at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Orlando.

**YOUR MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE DISASTER RELIEF**

2015-16 CTA/NEA-RETIRED LOCAL CHAPTERS
The CTA/NEA-Retired Board of Directors awards annual scholarships named in memory of Sharilynn G. Russo. The funds provide financial aid to students pursuing a college degree, credential or certification for a Speech Pathology and/or Audiology-related career in public education from an accredited institution of higher education. With these CTA Scholarships, we hope to address the severe shortage in this field by encouraging students to enroll in these programs and help support those already in SLP and/or SLPA programs so they may eventually aid this underserved population of students.

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SENIOR HEALTH ISSUE: GETTING PAST LONELINESS

By Sharon Fitch Boudreau, District 4 Director

A report in the 2012 census found that half of the women age 75 and older are widows, and the number increases to nearly 75% for women age 85 and older. And, it’s not only women who experience loss. The death of a partner is devastating for men as well. Loneliness is not limited to those who have lost a partner, but you can turn it around with a few positive steps. There is hope.

FIRST:
Turn to others for help. Call on friends and explore a few support groups until you find the one that fits. Seek out help from senior centers, clergy or professionals in the medical fields. It may not be easy, but you have to want to change. You have to get up no matter how you feel. Force yourself to do something. Meet with friends or do activities, even if you don’t want to. THEN, if you keep at it, change will happen one day at a time.

SECOND:
Volunteering is often a panacea for loneliness and a rewarding activity for both the recipients and the volunteers. Ellie, a recent widow, was encouraged to volunteer at her local hospital. The hospital was full of bad memories for Ellie -- it was where her late husband spent so much time during his illness and where he died. She resisted because the place held such sadness, but finally called the volunteer coordinator. The coordinator wisely placed her in the maternity ward, a place for new life. This gave her a sense of purpose again and a routine filled with activities.

THIRD:
Go back to things you used to do. Join a book club, take a trip planned for seniors or get back into cooking, gardening and having friends visit. Don’t turn down those invitations to lunch or a movie that you initially might just want to skip.

Granted, not everyone wants a full social calendar. Some people enjoy their time alone while others want more interaction. Find the balance that works for you. To paraphrase from an article I read recently - We have to help ourselves. Even if you have people in your life who care about you, they can’t do it for you. It’s not always easy but you have to march through the down times to come out and see the light.

WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?
Your primary care physician, your clergy or a trusted friend would be a good place to start. Also, hospitals and skilled nursing facilities usually have social workers who can supply resources. Another source for senior issues is your local Council on Aging which provides programs such as “Reconnect” and the “Friendly Visitor” program as well as opportunities for volunteering.