

Television, Transportation and Training

By R. David Wilcox
 President of the Board of Directors,
 The Seniors Foundation

The disparate elements of the title above are all related in that they represent important areas of involvement for the Seniors Foundation. The Foundation is continually evaluating areas of concern for older adults and seeking ways to facilitate necessary services. This is an ongoing effort for our board. But these three areas in particular — television, transportation and fitness training — merit special mention.

Television

Several programs on the cable public access channel (Channel 5) are targeted to the interests of older adults. These include Live and Learn, Exercise for a Lifetime, Yoga: Refresh and Renew and Pilates, plus rebroadcasts of concerts and events, interviews with older adults who are making a difference, etc. For years the pro-

duction costs of these programs have been funded by the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging (LAAA). Due to budget restrictions, however, the funding for these programs was cut. Currently, the Seniors Foundation is picking up the tab to keep these programs on cable while seeking funding partners for the future.



The hosts of Live and Learn (top right going clockwise): Don Gill, Ruth Ann Lyness, Barb Carlson, Peggy Briggs, Harland Johnson.

From our perspective, helping to sponsor these programs presents the Foundation with a double opportunity. One is the opportunity to gain increased public aware-

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Maurice Russell to Succeed David Wilcox as Board President

On June 30, Maurice Russell will succeed David Wilcox as president of the Seniors Foundation Board of Directors. Maurice, a retired pharmacist, has been a member of the board since 1999. Now 76, he still works every day at Russ's Market Pharmacy at 70th and Van Dorn streets.

Raised in Oklahoma, Maurice came to Nebraska after the Army to attend UNL, graduating from the pharmacy school in 1954. He then worked

as a retail pharmacist for 16 years — including six years at his own store before the property was purchased by UNL — and spent 27 years with the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company as a sales representative. He was the first pharmacy consultant for the State of Nebraska when Medicare and Medicaid were initiated in 1967.

Maurice has been involved in many community boards and organizations, including Family Service, the Lincoln Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Community Chest (now the United Way) and has a strong interest in issues facing older adults. He served as president of both the Nebraska Pharmacy Association and the Nebraska Pharmacy Association Foundation. In 1999 he was the Nebraska recipient of the prestigious Wyeth-Ayerst Bowl of Hygeia award for outstanding community service.

Dave Wilcox, current president of the Seniors Foundation, (left) and president-elect Maurice Russell at a recent Foundation meeting.



Television, Transportation and (fitness) Training — continued

ness of the Seniors Foundation and our important work. The second is that it will help us get the word out that funding is needed, not just for the Channel 5 programming, but for many projects that are targeted to older adults.

Transportation

Transportation for older adults is a critical and growing need in Lincoln. The greatest unmet need is for non-medical transportation. On average, after they stop driving, men live about five more years and women live 8-10 more years. That's a lot of living without the convenience of just hopping in a car to go someplace. But being able to go someplace is a big quality of life issue, especially for someone who is still mobile except for the ability to drive.

So, the social question is, how does society provide non-medical transportation for those who need it and how will society finance it for those who can't finance it themselves?

For years the Foundation has supported a van program run by LAAA. This service, which made 29,000 one-way trips last year, provides transportation to the ActivAge Centers (the new name for Senior Centers) and to some senior and community events. But wider service is needed. The Seniors Foundation and LAAA are looking into the feasibility of a social (non-medical) transportation program modeled on the Independent Transportation Network program in Portland, Maine. We will keep you informed as the project proceeds.

Fitness Training

We know that "use it or lose it" applies separately to both physical fitness and brain fitness. But we are learning that there is also a strong correlation between the two. Keeping physically active as we age helps us retain our mental faculties as well as reduce falls and prevent chronic diseases. And the degree of mobility we enjoy can have an impact on mental health. So, as we age we all need to pay increasing, not decreasing, attention to our physical fitness. And good physical fitness means more than just walking the malls. It also involves strength training.



On May 19, the Downtown ActivAge Center held an open house in the new Forever Strong Health Club. In this photo from the open house, Certified Personal Trainer Donna Swihart is helping Jerry Gibson (standing) and Richard Prasek become acquainted with two of the exercise machines. The Seniors Foundation is seeking funding to add new, elder-friendly strength-training machines.

In our last newsletter we mentioned our effort to get new, elder-friendly strength equipment in the Downtown ActivAge Center. Our fund raising effort toward that end was partially successful but we are hoping to raise \$10,000 more. Part of our plan is to find a sponsor who will provide a \$5,000 matching grant.

A personal note

This is the last update on board activities that I will author for this newsletter. It has been challenging and extremely rewarding to serve as the Foundation's president for the past two years. The enthusiasm within the LAAA to help older adults in need is truly inspirational. Those fine people are certainly doing their part and it is up to us — society at large — to do our part. The Seniors Foundation is a key component of that broader effort, and I'm happy that we have a person of Maurice Russell's caliber taking over as president. He is an extraordinarily energetic and knowledgeable individual with a long history of community involvement. The Foundation is in good hands.

Welcome, New Board Members

Jay Bohlken ~ *Executive Director, Legacy Estates*
 Helen Griffin ~ *Board Chair, Southeast Community College*
 Kristen Stohs, *Board Chair, Friends of Lied*
 Karen Larsen ~ *Former Director, Foster Grandparent Program*
 Marcia Kushner ~ *Community Volunteer*
 Barbara McCabe ~ *Professor, UNL College of Nursing*

Medicaid Changes Could Have a Significant Effect on Participating Seniors



By Richard Blair
Director of Development,
The Seniors Foundation

Though Social Security reform is the focus of national attention these days, there is another type of reform — Medicaid reform — that could have a major effect on many older adults.

Nebraska's budget currently dedicates \$508 million (17.2%) for Medicaid funding in the fiscal 05-06 year. This amount is expected to grow by 8% — to \$549 million — in the next fiscal year. This type of expenditure growth is not sustainable, so changes will have to be made.

A complicating fact, for seniors, is that while older adults and people with disabilities make up just 24% of the total Medicaid population (with low income children and their parents comprising the balance), they currently account for 67% of Medicaid costs. And the high percentage that goes to seniors is projected to increase significantly in the coming years due to the baby-boom bubble that is nearing retirement age.

As a result, it is a sure bet that Medicaid benefits to older adults will not escape scrutiny. In fact, the move to contain Medicaid costs has already started on both the national and state levels. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Health is creating a panel to provide recommendations on cutting \$10 billion in Medicaid spending over five years, and then making long term recommendations on reforming Medicaid by December 2006.

In Nebraska, the Legislature is considering a bill (LB 709) that will initiate research on Medicaid

issues at the state level. If the bill is passed, the effort will, among other things, assess the appropriate role of county government in providing health care services, the proper degree of personal responsibility in paying for all or a portion of one's health care services, and funding alternatives.

Innovative cost containment

Clearly, the cost of Medicaid is a huge issue. But the answer doesn't lie solely in a wholesale reduction of benefits. In fact, there is a program in operation right now that shows how innovative cost-containment strategies can produce win/win results. Known as Medicaid Waiver, this federal/state program allows coverage of in-home services as a less expensive alternative to placement in a nursing home.

Locally, this program is operated by the LIFE office in the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging (LAAA). With more than 350 older adults in Lancaster County enrolled in the program, LAAA calculates that average costs range from \$1500 per month for in-home support to \$2,100 for assisted living support. This is in sharp contrast to the cost of local nursing home care, which ranges from \$3,000 to \$5,000 a month.

As the numbers show, with this program everybody wins. The tax payers get a major cost savings while the participating older adults get to stay in their own homes longer.

The lesson of Medicare Waiver is that sensible cost containment should be everyone's concern. For our part, the Seniors Foundation is continually looking for projects that can provide the Medicare Waiver type of win/win result.

The Seniors Foundation Board of Directors as of June 1, 2005

President: R. David Wilcox, *Union Bank*; **President Elect:** Maurice L. Russell; **Treasurer:** Jay Heins, *Buckley, Sitzman*; **Secretary:** Alice Skultety, *Union Bank*. **Jay Bohlken**, *Legacy Estates*; **Helen Boosalis**, *Former Mayor of Lincoln*; **Ken Cheloha**, *Gage Industrial*; **Dallen George**, *Cattle National Bank & Trust*; **Helen Griffen**; **Barbara Jacobson**, *Lincoln Public Schools*; **Paula Kort**; **Michelle Shandera Kugler**, *Rembolt Ludtke & Berger*; **Marcia Kushner**; **Karen Larsen**; **Dr. Barbara McCabe**, *UNL College of Nursing*; **June Pederson**, *Lincoln Area Agency on Aging*; **David Polson**, *Sterling Communications*; **Kristen Stohs**; **Nancy Tramel**, *Legacy Estates*.

Foundation staff: Richard Blair, *Director of Development*; Meldene Dorn, *Board Assistant*.

News Briefs

Gil Savery joins Journalism Hall of Fame

Congratulations to Gil Savery on being named to the Nebraska Journalism Hall of Fame. Gil served as president of the Seniors Foundation in 1990 and 1991.

June Pederson Invited to Attend White House Conference on Aging

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman has invited June Pederson, Director of the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging, to be one of his three delegates to the December, 2005 White House Conference on Aging. Each of Nebraska's five members of Congress will also choose a delegate.

This conference occurs once a decade to make aging policy recommendations to the President and Congress, and to assist the public and private sectors in promoting dignity, health, independence and economic security of current and future generations of older persons.

Thanks for the articles...

...and the memories. A tip of the Seniors Foundation hat to the writers below who shared their thoughts and experiences in the *Front Porch Journal*, a special feature during May on our website at www.seniorsfoundation.org



Gil Savery



Louise Heiselman



Ed Duckworth

Want to Help?

Please send contributions to the Seniors Foundation at P.O. Box 81904, Lincoln, NE 68501-1904

or

Call Richard Blair at 441-6179 for more information on our projects and our needs. Thank you.

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