



## COMING TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR OLDER ADULTS

### **NC Coalition on Aging First of the Month Update – November 2016**

**Elections** – With election day less than a week away, North Carolina continues to be bombarded with non-stop political ads, visits, and other tactics in a last ditch effort by candidates to reach voters. With everything that is going on, it can be hard to sort through all the “noise” and find out candidates’ positions about issues that are important to the people of our state. Issues which impact older adults and their family caregivers, except for the occasional mention of Social Security and Medicare, have for the most part not been on the radar screen of those seeking election this year. Perhaps it is time for aging advocacy groups to have conversation about this matter and to look at steps that can be taken to change this.

Thanks to the News and Observer and several other media outlets for frequently sharing candidates’ positions on key issues facing our state. Click [here](#) to see the plans for health care from the candidates for Governor (*News and Observer*, October 16, Focus).

**Hurricane Matthew** – Efforts are still underway in many communities in eastern North Carolina to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew. Many of those impacted were older adults who had lived in their homes for years. A large number of those most greatly impacted are low-income and a significant number face mobility and other challenges in rebuilding their lives. Local aging and other human service agencies in many counties are stepping up to the plate to help serve many of the older adults in need. Thanks to all those who are helping in this time of great need. An [article](#) by the Fayetteville Observer talks about the efforts of seniors in that community to get disaster food assistance. A total of 37 counties across eastern North Carolina have been approved for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services benefits.

The General Assembly is expected to return to Raleigh in December to begin to address the long-term financial needs of those impacted by the Hurricane. The Governor’s office has announced the formation of a Hurricane Matthew Recovery Committee. The Committee includes nearly three dozen high profile figures and community leaders including former state budget director Art Pope, UNC System President Margaret Spellings, and former Governor Bev Perdue who will be tasked with fundraising and developing long-term recovery plans. To find out more about resources for recovery assistance, click [here](#) to see a list compiled by the N.C. Department of Public Safety.

**State Representative Paul Luebke** – We were saddened to learn that Rep. Paul Luebke (D - Durham) died on October 29 following a recurrence of lymphoma. Rep. Luebke, 70, represented Durham in the state House for 25 years. He was a strong advocate for the less fortunate, and was a supporter of aging issues throughout his tenure. Although passionate about things he believed in, Rep. Luebke was never one to use personal attacks or malign those who did not agree with his position. He served in the General Assembly honorably and his presence there will be greatly missed. Rep. Luebke was running for his 14<sup>th</sup> term in the House and his name will remain on the ballot. Members of the Durham County Democratic Party will meet before election day to name a replacement candidate and that person will receive his votes. The Party will vote separately to choose someone to fill the remainder of his current term.

**Appointments Named to Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging** – On October 28, Governor Pat McCrory announced several appointments to the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging. Those appointed were John Thompson from Carteret County, Susan McGuire from Johnston County (reappointed), Joyce Boone from Wake County, John Hammond from Orange County (reappointed) and Richard Scott from Halifax County (reappointment). Mr. Scott is Chair of the Council.

**Transforming North Carolina’s Mental Health and Substance Use Systems Report**

**Released** – In 2015, the N.C. Institute of Medicine, with funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and in partnership with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, convened a Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Use. The goal of the Task Force was to develop recommendations to increase and improve community-based and evidence-informed prevention, treatment, and services and supports for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. The Task Force had three workgroups, one of which focused on older adults and the unique needs of this population.

The Task Force [report](#) was released on October 25 at a Mental Health, Substance Use, and Aging Conference in Winston-Salem at Wake Forest University that was attended by over 200 people from across the state (to learn more about the Conference and to view handouts from presenters, click [here](#)). Included in the report was a chapter on meeting the needs of older adults with mental health and substance use challenges. Recommendations in the report were:

- Establish statewide coordinated leadership to oversee older adult health.
- Use Geriatric Adult Mental Health Specialty Teams (GASTs) to train communities on issues of older adult mental health.
- Increase support for the Seniors Health Insurance Information Program.
- Improve the capacity of primary care practices to screen, treat, and refer older adults to treatment for behavioral health needs.
- Increase case management services for older adults.
- Increase the number of eligible behavioral health care providers billing Medicare.

**Study Looks at How Medicaid Can Help Veterans** – The Wake Forest University School of Law’s Health Law and Policy Program has released a study entitled “Can Medicaid Help (North Carolina) Military Veterans?” The study is by Mark A. Hall, professor of Law and Health Policy, and Katherine E. Booth (JD ’15), Health Law and Policy research associate. The report of the study is one of a series of Issue Briefs produced by the Law and Policy Program that explores the costs and benefits of Medicaid in North Carolina. This Issue Brief focuses on the potential for Medicaid to benefit military veterans. North Carolina has a large military and veteran population (fourth largest in the nation), and veterans are one of the groups of North Carolina citizens who could benefit from Medicaid funding under the Affordable Care Act. The study estimates that 12,000 uninsured veterans in the state could be helped through Medicaid. To learn more about the study click [here](#).

**More on Medicaid and Health Care Coverage** - There has been numerous stories, letters to the editor, etc. in local media recently about closing the **health care coverage gap and health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act**. Some of these are:

*N.C. Health News*, November 3, 2016 – [“Rural Advocates Push for Medicaid Expansion”](#)  
*News and Observer*, October 31, 2016 – [“ACA Expense is Deceptive and Not Prohibitive”](#)  
*Asheville Citizens-Times*, October 28, 2016 – [“Vote to Close N.C.’s Health and Wellness Gap”](#)  
*News and Observer*, October 27, 2016 – [“The Deadly Toll of N.C.’s Withholding Medicaid”](#)  
*Wilmington Star News*, October 26, 2016 – [“Refusing Medicaid Expands Suffering”](#)  
*News and Observer*, October 20, 2016 – [“Nearly Half of Uninsured Americans Eligible for Medicaid or Marketplace Subsidies”](#)  
*News and Observer*, October 14, 2016 – [“In NC, Thousand Still Lack Insurance and Health Care; What Should the State Do?”](#)

Several interesting videos and news clips have also been released:

From N.C. Child, the N.C. Justice Center, and Georgetown University - Video on [“N.C. Families in the Health Coverage Gap”](#)

From: VICE News Tonight on HBO (Originally aired October 20, 2016) - [“The Real Life Suffering of Those Inside the Health Coverage Gap”](#) (Dr. Steve Luking, a Family Practice physician in Reidsville, and one of his patient’s families is featured)

**Medicare Overhauls Doctor’s Compensation** – On October 14, Medicare unveiled regulations for an extensive overhaul of how it compensates doctors and other clinicians for providing care to Medicare beneficiaries. The goal of the overhaul is to reward quality, cost-effective care instead of paying piecemeal for services. The regulations implement the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) that creates two new payment systems, or tracks, for clinicians. Most of the more than 600,000 clinicians who bill Medicare are affected. Starting in 2019, clinicians can earn higher reimbursement if they learn new ways of doing business by joining the Alternative Payment Models track that involves being willing to accept financial risk and reward for performance, reporting quality measures to the government, and using electronic medical records. Medicare estimates that 70,000 to 120,000 clinicians will choose this track.

Most clinicians are expected to join the second track called the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System which features more modest financial incentives, and accountability for quality, efficiency, use of electronic medical records, and self-improvement. It is expected to take years to fully implement this overhaul of the Medicare payment system. To read more about this, click [here](#).

**Friends of Residents in Long Term Care Adopt 2017 Public Policy Goals** – The Board of Directors of Friends recently adopted the following goals to pursue in the upcoming session of the General Assembly:

- Require notification, access and input by residents, family members or responsible parties in the penalty determination process for adult and family care homes.
- Appropriate recurring state appropriations to meet the growing need for and complexity of Adult Protective Services in North Carolina.
- Enact legislation that will bring North Carolina's Community Advisory Committees into compliance with Federal requirements for volunteer ombudsmen.
- Require an independent, objective cost study of the actual cost of providing care in assisted living facilities in North Carolina with the goal to increase reimbursement rates for personal care and special assistance if warranted.
- Enact state legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory pre-admission arbitration agreements as a condition of admittance to long term care

**Lawyer Referral Service** – Friends of Residents in Long-Term Care has announced that it now has a free lawyer referral service in place. To access information about this service, click [here](#). Friends states that the goal for this service is to help consumers and family members find an experienced attorney in North Carolina who practices in the areas of elder abuse, neglect, nursing home litigation, or medical malpractice. Attorneys who participate in the Lawyer Referral Service are insured, in good standing throughout the state of North Carolina, and have at least eight years of experience in the area of long-term care litigation. A list of attorneys participating in the Lawyer Referral Service can be obtained by emailing [friends@forltc.org](mailto:friends@forltc.org).

**18 Steps to Fall Proofing Your Home** – Check out the recent National Council on Aging (NCOA) blog post by Scott A. Trudeau, an occupational therapist and the Productive Aging and Interprofessional Collaborative Practice Program Manager for the American Occupational Therapy Association, on 18 steps to fall proof your home. More than 75% of falls take place inside or in close proximity to the home. Simple things like having adequate lighting at your front door can easily help reduce the risk of falling. To read the 18 steps, click [here](#).

## Alzheimer's/Dementia News:

- The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services has announced that **Mark Hensley** has been **selected for the Dementia Services Coordinator position** that was funded by the General Assembly this year to oversee North Carolina's Alzheimer's/Dementia Capable Plan. Mark has been acting in this role for over a year in addition to directing the Project CARE caregiver support program and serving as the Division's Alzheimer's program consultant. The Division now has an opening for Mark's "old" position which will primarily direct the day-to-day management of Project CARE sites, including the three new sites that were funded by the General Assembly this year. This position is expected to be posted within the next several weeks.
- Is there a **link between arsenic, Alzheimer's disease**, coal ash and poultry farms? Check out this [blog post](#) from NC Policy Watch which reports on interesting findings from state health data and research underway at Duke.
- The national **Alzheimer's Association Advocacy Forum** will be in Washington, D.C. on March 27-29, 2017.
- The Alzheimer's Association reports that following the growing support for the **Health Outcomes, Planning and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer's Act** in Congress this year and the inclusion of the Act in the bill passed by the full committee of the Senate, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced a new service allowing individuals with dementia and their families to receive **comprehensive care planning services**. This new service allows those with Alzheimer's disease to have access to a cognitive and functional assessment and care planning session with a healthcare professional. CMS is expected to finalize the rule for this service and implement it in 2017.
- According to the national Alzheimer's Association, **every 66 seconds, someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's**.
- Check out the article this week by Tommy Goldsmith for N.C. Health News entitled ["Lewy Body Dementia Finally Merits Attention, Research."](#)
- Several **new findings were announced at the 2016 Alzheimer's Association International Conference** held in Toronto in July including:
  1. The potential of odor identification testing and physical changes in and round the eye to detect cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's at an early stage was bolstered by new evidence in four studies.
  2. Researchers introduced a new condition known as Mild Behavioral Impairment (MBI) that may be a forerunner of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. They also proposed a new MBI checklist which may eventually help clinicians capture changes in behavior that signal the beginnings of neurodegeneration.
  3. New data that suggests that people whose work requires complex thinking or activities can better withstand the onset of Alzheimer's. Results suggest that

working with people, rather than data or physical things, contributed the most to the protective effect.

- Join the Cary Central and Cary Kildaire Rotary Clubs on November 7 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Cary Theater as they present **Enough is Enough! Why is There No Effective Treatment for Alzheimer’s Disease and What Can We Do About It?** Presenters for this event will be Dr. Carol Colton, Professor of Neurology, Duke University Medical Center; Dr. Kathleen Welsh-Bohmer, Professor of Psychology and Neurology, Duke University Medical Center; and Mark Hensley with the N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services. There is no cost for admission to this event, but attendees will have the opportunity to contribute to Coins for the Alzheimer’s Research Trust.

### **Additional News and Resources of Interest:**

- On October 18, the Social Security Administration announced that monthly **Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** benefits for more than 65 million Americans will increase 0.3 percent in 2017. This cost-of-living adjustment (**COLA**) will begin with benefits payable to more than 60 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2017 and for 8 million SSI beneficiaries on December 30, 2016.
- Speaking of Social Security, a new analysis from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, **Social Security lifted 22 million people out of poverty last year**, including 520,000 people in North Carolina. To read more about this analysis and how Social Security fights poverty, click [here](#).
- Medicare Open Enrollment continues until December 7. Check out the NCOA’s [Complete Guide to Open Enrollment](#) including its checklist to help older adults review their plans.
- The **U.S. Supreme Court has announced that it will hear arguments in two racial gerrymandering cases**, including the North Carolina case *McCrary v. Harris*, on December 5. This case deals specifically with Districts 1 and 12 after a three-judge panel ruled in February that the North Carolina Congressional District map was drawn with racial bias.
- The **N.C. Center for Public Policy Research is becoming part of EducationNC**, a website that focuses on education news and policy. Mebane Rash, CEO and EdNC editor-in-chief and former director of law and policy for the Research Center said the Center will be the “policy hub or research arm” of the organization. The Center for Public Policy Research, during its 39 years of operation, was known for its in-depth report on issues facing the state. In addition, it published rankings of lobbyists and legislators which will be discontinued.
- The **NC Partnership to Address Adult Abuse** has a new website address ([www.ncp3a.org](http://www.ncp3a.org)) and a new e-mail address ([info@ncp3a.org](mailto:info@ncp3a.org)). The next Partnership meeting is November 16, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. at the [Triangle J Council of Governments](#).

- Creative Aging Network-NC (CAN-NC) has announced that the **2017 Creative Aging Symposium** will be held on May 4 in Greensboro and May 5 in Charlotte (a duplicate event) and is now accepting proposals for presentations. CAN-NC is a state-wide nonprofit organization that works to enhance the well-being of older people through creative arts programming, education and training throughout the state. To learn more, click [here](#) or send e-mail to [info@can-nc.org](mailto:info@can-nc.org).
- The **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services** will meet on November 29 at 8:30 a.m. in room 643 of the Legislative Office Building. The **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice** will meet that same day and in the same room at 1:00 p.m.
- **Leslie Boney III has been named Director of the Institute of Emerging Issues (IEI)** at N.C. State University effective January 1, 2017. Currently, he is working as Vice-President of International, Community, and Economic Engagement for the University of North Carolina system. IEI encourages public collaboration on addressing society's great challenges and forming solutions that will ensure North Carolina's future competitiveness.
- **Care4Carolina is seeking to hire a Campaign Director** who will be responsible for executing a strategic plan for a campaign to close the coverage gap in our state. This person will serve as the lead for coalition development and decision maker relationship building. The position is posted through the American Heart Association HR. To learn more about this position, click [here](#).
- **Join the N.C. Justice Center for First Friday** on November 4 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. for a reception and special exhibit from the Center for Documentary Studies and the Samuel Dubois Cook Center for Social Equity, both at Duke University. **Trying to Get By: (Not) Making Ends Meet in North Carolina** is a series of banners and short videos about life earning low wages in North Carolina. It features personal stories from home health aides, house cleaners, fast food workers, and pre-K teacher, showcasing life without health care or paid time off, or with the threat of wage theft or abusive workplaces. First Friday will take place at the N.C. Justice Center located at 224 S. Dawson Street in Raleigh. Admission is free. To find out more and to RSVP, click [here](#).
- The Leapfrog Group announced this week its Fall 2016 release of the **Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade**, a program which assigns A,B,C,D or F letter grades to more than 2,600 U.S. hospitals bi-annually. Leapfrog is a voluntary assessment program that uses data from its own surveys and from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Five hospitals in the in Triangle region were awarded an "A" based on patient safety, infection rates, and other quality measures. To learn more and to check ratings for specific hospitals, click [here](#).
- **Congratulations to Victor O. Orija**, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman with the N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services, for being named the recipient of the **2016 Sharon Wilder Advocacy Award** given by Friends of Residents in Long-Term Care.

- November is **National Hospice and Palliative Care Month**. Look for events or activities in your community to raise awareness about hospice and palliative care.

**Additional Articles/Stories:**

*N.C. Health News* – October 30, 2016 – [“Overnight Respite for Caregivers on the Horizon for N.C.”](#)

*NPR* – October 27, 2016 – [“Seniors’ Teeth Need Dental Care, But Insurance Coverage is Rare”](#)

*N.C. Health News* – October 24, 2016 – [“Medicare Suspends ‘Seamless Conversion’ Practice, Allows for Re-enrollment”](#)

*NPR* – October 24, 2016 – [“Getting Dental Care Can Be Challenge for People with Disabilities”](#)

*ScienceDaily* – October 20, 2016 – [“More American Men with Early-Stage Prostate Cancer Could Opt Out of Immediate Treatment”](#)

*PBS NEWSHOUR* – September 27, 2016 – [“How Caring for a Dying Husband Made My Life Worth Living”](#)

**December Coalition Meeting** – The Coalition is pleased that Secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Rick Brajer, will join us for the Coalition’s last meeting of the year on December 9. Secretary Brajer was scheduled to be at the October Coalition meeting but had to cancel due to a conflict. He will give very brief remarks, but he wants to spend most of his time at the meeting hearing from Coalition members about the needs of older adults and their family caregivers and about what is working well as well as where challenges exist in providing programs and services for our state’s older residents. Time at the meeting will also be devoted to voting on the Coalition’s 2017 legislative agenda. The meeting will be at 10:00 a.m. in the first floor conference room at the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services (693 Palmer Drive, Taylor Hall on the Dix campus).

**Submitting Information for Updates** – If you have news or information on activities and events you would like to have included in an Update to Coalition members, please send details to Mary Bethel, Coalition President, at [mmbethel72@gmail.com](mailto:mmbethel72@gmail.com).

**Coalition on Aging Membership** – Are you interested in getting more involved in being an advocate for older North Carolinians? If yes, consider becoming a member of the Coalition on Aging. Membership in the Coalition is open to any agency, organization, group, or individual who is interested in aging in North Carolina. To renew your membership or to sign up for the first time, go to <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/membership.aspx>.

**Have questions about the Coalition on Aging or need more information? Check out our website at <http://www.nccoalitiononaging.org/>.**