

FROM THE DIRECTOR



DO YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE? ...AND WHAT WE DO?

Do you know what we do? I have found that people know our name -- "Serving Our Seniors"-- but they don't know the programs & services we provide to Erie County residents age 60+.

Serving Our Seniors frequently gets credit for things that we have accomplished -- and oddly enough, we also get credit for the good things that other organizations have accomplished for the betterment of older adults age 60+. So I am going to use this issue of the Eldergazette to talk about:

- Who we are
- What we do to help Erie County residents age 60+ to maintain their ability to live independently.
- What you can do to help us have a greater impact on the lives of older Americans living in Erie County, Ohio.

I hope you find this issue enlightening.

Happy Holidays to all of our readers!!

Sue Daugherty
Director

From The Beginning....

Where did Serving Our Seniors Come From?



Judge Jane Lucal



Ray & Marian Koch

Serving Our Seniors was the brainchild of Erie County Probate Court Judge Jane Lucal, who has since retired. She gave birth to the idea of Serving Our Seniors in 1994 and founded this not-for-profit, charitable organization in 1996, with her two "right-hands" Ray & Marian Koch, along with the assistance of many volunteers.

Judge Lucal was frustrated by the number of elderly coming before her court, whose mental and/or physical health had deteriorated so seriously that guardianships needed to be appointed to ensure the well-being of that older person.

She asked, "Why isn't there an organization that keeps a pulse on what senior citizens need"? "Why isn't there a program to help prevent older people from needing a guardian"? "Why isn't there just one place to call for anything an older person might need"?

With that she began to organize a steering committee of senior citizens/volunteers/activists to bring to life such an organization to benefit residents age 60+, living in Erie County. It was under their leadership that Serving Our Seniors was established, funded by the "Erie County Senior Services Tax Levy" and set the course for helping Erie County residents age 60+ to maintain their independence in their own home.

What Does Serving Our Seniors Do for Senior Citizen?

The programs and services that are funded by Serving Our Seniors are designed to help Erie County residents age 60+ maintain their ability to live independently.

What Serving Our Seniors does NOT do is this – **We do not duplicate service.** If there is a social service that already helps individuals in a low income bracket with care in the home, Serving Our Seniors will not enroll that person into our “Personal Care & Housekeeping Program”. Instead, we would help the senior citizen apply to a social service known as PASSPORT. PASSPORT would arrange for the home care that individual needs and provide the financial subsidy so the care is affordable.

Here is a list of our program & services on a “cost-sharing” basis:

- Personal Care & Housekeeping
- Handyman Program (aka minor home repair)
- Ramps
- Emergency Home Repair

What Is Cost-Sharing?

Serving Our Seniors makes the programs listed above available at a cost the senior citizen can afford. This is done by “cost-sharing”. **Cost-sharing means the older adult pays what they can afford to pay. Serving Our Seniors shares the cost by paying the difference.**

Note: “Cost-sharing” is conducted on a case-by-case basis and is a thorough assessment of the individual’s income vs. expenses and a disclosure of their assets (not counting the home they live in and the car they drive).

Other programs & services are available that do not require “cost-sharing”, but we do ask for an anonymous donation or a small fee.

These programs are:

- **Share A Ride** - Transportation M-F for \$1.50/trip in the city; 2.00/trip in rural areas
- **Rural Hot Home Delivered Meals** - (\$2.50/meal donation is suggested.)
- **Out of Town Medical Transportation** - for an anonymous donation

We have two programs that are free of charge

- Problem Solving
- Advocacy

How Does Problem Solving Help Older Adults of Erie County?



(L) Nancy Rodriguez, Kevin Lee (Center) Kristen Harkness (Right)

There are plenty of questions/problems/concerns on the minds of senior citizens – especially when difficulties are putting their independence at risk.

Last year Nancy, Kevin and Kristen helped to resolve over 10,000 questions/problems/concerns like this:

- **QUESTION:** What Medicare Part D plan offers the best coverage?
ANSWER: Once you give us a list of your medications, the dose, and the quantity of pills you take per month of each drug, we compare and contrast your medication needs against the 42+ different drug plans and give you an answer.

How Does Problem Solving

Help Older Adults of Erie County? (continued)

PROBLEM: I received this notice from Medicare in the mail. My Medicare Account is being charged for medical procedures I never had.

ANSWER: This sounds like Medicare Fraud. Serving Our Seniors and the Inspector General's Office can help you give this problem the attention it deserves, until the fraud is corrected. Bring in your documents and we can begin working on this problem.

CONCERN: I'm afraid I won't be able to keep my utility connected this winter?

ANSWER: Your income and the # of people living in your household will determine if you qualify for any utility assistance. If you call our office and ask to speak with Kevin, Nancy or Kristen they can help you find out what assistance is available to you.

QUESTION: I heard that people age 60+ get free coupons to redeem in the spring and summer for locally grown produce. How do I get these coupons?

ANSWER: This is a program that's called FARMERS MARKET COUPONS. It is offered by the "Area Office on Aging" in Toledo. You can call them at 800-472-7277 and ask for an application. If you would like Serving Our Seniors to help you make your request for a FARMERS MARKET Application, we can call the Area Office on Aging, while keeping you on the phone. We can facilitate your request.

PROBLEM: I can't afford my blood pressure medicine.

ANSWER: There are a three ways Kevin, Kristen, or Nancy can help you – *if you qualify*. **1.** The manufacturer of your medication might give it to you. **2.** You might qualify to use the Drug Repository Program. Medications cost \$7.40 per prescription. **3.** Or your doctor might have free samples he could give to you – if you ask. We would work to help you in one of these three ways.



(L)Anthony Pool, Senior Advocate
(R) Chris Ferguson, Quality Assurance Manger

An Advocate is someone knowledgeable and there to help you understand your rights and navigate through difficult procedures. Anthony Pool, with help from his supervisor Chris Ferguson advocate for senior citizens who are experiencing complicated issues compromising their ability to maintain their independence.

Using a Senior Advocate does not mean the older adult gives up their decision-making power. The Senior Advocate will only assist in troubleshooting those issues that the senior citizen wants help with. There is one caveat... the older person he is advocating for must be competent and capable of making their own decisions.

Below are some examples of what a Senior Advocate does to help the senior citizen address and resolve complex matters:

- He will come to your home to talk with you, so you can learn what is available to help you maintain your independence.
- Coordinates the help you need. He often helps those who are being discharged from the hospital to go home – alone.
- Helps you to get your finances in order, by introducing you and encouraging you to use home budgeting classes, credit counseling, bill paying services, and assisting you by filling out applications for programs that offer financial assistance.
- Confronting foreclosure before it confronts you. If you don't know how to use the foreclosure prevention programs, Anthony can help you through these overwhelming processes.



Dick Spier, Marj Bone, Marilyn Cummings, Jim & Betty Morris, Geori Domitriov, Tom Surdyk & Millie Markus are just some of the people who have given time to drive someone to a medically necessary appointment.

DRIVEN BY VOLUNTEERS: The Out of Town Medical Transportation Program

CARING PEOPLE MAKE A COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY. That's why Serving Our Seniors is able to offer the Out of Town Medical Transportation Program.

Thanks to area volunteers, Serving Our Seniors is able to drive medically stable, senior citizens -- who are living independently -- to medically necessary appointments that are located out of town from where they live.

Serving Our Seniors has 30 volunteers who drive 1 day per month. (Some drive more often if they want to.) **We need 15 more volunteer drivers to fill in for our "Snowbirds" who are leaving this winter! Or are on an LOA. Can you help us?**

We ask the passenger for an anonymous donation. Last year it cost \$10,715.00 to operate the Out of Town Medical Transportation program. These costs include: Vehicle maintenance & repair, fuel, and insurance. **All labor is donated!!**

On behalf of the staff of Serving Our Seniors and the senior citizens who have been helped, THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE BEEN VOLUNTEERING FOR THIS VERY WORTHY CAUSE.

Rural Hot Home Delivered Meals



**(L) Huron Volunteer, Sue Machovina
(R) Huron Resident, Charolette Edwards**

Before Serving Our Seniors (located at 319 E. Boalt Street – Sandusky) came into existence, hot home delivered meals were not available to senior citizens who lived in the rural areas of Erie County. Today it is a **Priority #1 Program** in our budget.

The Rural Hot Home Delivered Meal Program is funded by Serving Our Seniors. The food is cooked packaged and managed by the Erie County Senior Center (located at 620 E. Water Street – Sandusky).

In 1997 Serving Our Seniors purchased a hot home delivered meal truck and worked out a partnership with the Erie County Senior Center to have hot home delivered meals taken to the rural aspects of Erie County. Back then we delivered **3,512** meals over a 12 month period. The program has grown since we started. From October 1, 2008 – September 30, 2009, **30,047** hot home delivered meals were delivered to the rural communities of Erie County.

This program is designed to help Erie County residents, age 60+ who are at nutritional risk. A suggested donation of \$2.50/meal is requested. However, any amount is appreciated and all donations are given anonymously.

Thank you Erie County Senior Center and the volunteers who make this service possible!!

Affordable Medications Program

Serving Our Seniors can help those who cannot afford to fill their prescriptions. We do this one of three ways:

1. We write to the manufacturer who makes the medication and submit an application asking for a low cost/no cost supply of medications as prescribed by the senior citizen's physician
2. Through Serving Our Seniors "Medicine Fund" we purchase liquid medications that treat diabetes, glaucoma, cataracts, as long as funds are available.
3. The Drug Repository. This was started by Serving Our Seniors & Buderer Drug Store working together.

What is a Drug Repository? It is a pharmacy that is allowed to accept donated medications from nursing homes and institutional pharmacies and dispense them to individuals who otherwise could not afford to buy their medications. **THE LAW FORBIDS THE DRUG REPOSITORY FROM ACCEPTING ANY MEDICATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN STORED IN A PATIENT'S HOME! (SORRY)**



Latoya Warren, is an employee of Serving Our Seniors and works as an "Inventory Assistant" for the Drug Repository Program.

At the Drug Repository senior citizens can then get their medications for \$7.40/prescription, provided the medication is one of the drugs that has been donated and is in stock. For more information call Serving Our Seniors at 419-624-1856 or 800-564-1856.

DRUG REPOSITORY PROGRAM MAY CLOSE WITHOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT

The Drug Repository is in jeopardy and may close January 1st, 2010. This is the program that makes medicines available to people who can't afford to fill their prescriptions. Do you use the Drug Repository Program – or do you know someone who does? Please write to Governor Strickland and First Lady Francis Strickland (Mrs. Strickland was a strong lobbying force to see that the Drug Repository legislation was passed) at THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, Riffe Center, 30th Floor, 77 S. High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-6108 or fax to (614) 466-9354 In your letter make an emphatic request for the Governor to **sign an Executive Order** that would prevent the Drug Repository Program from having to reduce the dispensing fee from \$7.40/medication to \$3.60/medication. If the Drug Repository Program in Erie County experiences this loss of revenue, the Drug Repository Program cannot afford to operate. It will have to close. A phone call would also be effective (614) 466-3555.

The SNOWBALL DANCE January 9, 2010



Ballroom Dance to the **Frank Fosco Trio** at -- **The Snow Ball, Jan. 9th, 2010** at the Sandusky Eagles. Doors open at 6:30pm. **Music 7pm – 10 pm. BYOB, all new hors d'oeuvre buffet . \$20.00 per person.** Door prizes and two 50-50% cash raffles. All tickets sold in advance. **No tickets will be sold at the door.** Call Sue Daugherty at 419-503-5050 & leave a message to purchase a ticket. All sales are final.

SHARE A RIDE Provides Transportation with Door to Door Assistance



Jean Altvater uses Share A Ride Transportation

If you drive, try living a couple weeks without your car. If you do that, you will quickly see that affordable transportation is essential to the independence of older people who do not drive. That's why transportation is a #1 priority in Serving Our Seniors budget.

Without a car or a driver it is difficult get access to your doctor, the grocery store, the pharmacy, to get your hair cut, see your friends, etc... That's why **SHARE A RIDE** exists.

Serving Our Seniors funds senior citizen transportation, so that older adults can ride at an affordable cost. The cost for city residents is \$1.50 per 1-way trip; \$2.00 per 1-way trip for rural residents age 60+. For those who want the help, the **Share A Ride** driver will escort the senior citizen from the door of their home to the door of the vehicle, and assist with their bags, too.

The vehicles are also handicapped accessible. If you use a walker or a wheelchair, getting onto and off of the **SHARE A RIDE** bus is simple.

On average 149 senior citizens/month use **SHARE A RIDE** to help them maintain their independence. From October 1, 2008 – Sept. 30, 2009 senior citizens took 15,116 trips on **SHARE A RIDE**.

HANDYMAN PROGRAM

Makes minor repairs to prevent major problems



Mr. Wraggs shows the grab bar installed by Matt Strecker Strecker Remodeling

One of life's difficulties is maintaining your home as you age. Those things you use to do yourself aren't so easy as senior citizen. Grip strength declines, dexterity diminishes along with the muscle strength to lift and balance.

Affording a professional is what is needed, but it's not always affordable. Or maybe they have the money, but they are afraid of being ripped off by someone they don't know, so the repair isn't made.

That's why Serving Our Senior has the "Handyman Program". and we can send a legitimate minor home repair professional to your home to perform small jobs – i.e., put a new wax ring under your toilet, so it will stop leaking onto the bathroom floor, install a grab bar in your home, or fix a broken window.

It's best to make the repair before it becomes a crisis. If affording a minor repair is a problem, Serving Our Seniors can work with you, so you pay what is affordable for your individual circumstances. We want you to continue living safely in your home. Give us a call at 419-624-1856 or 800-564-1856.

Where Does Serving Our Seniors Get It's Money to Help Senior Citizens?

Almost all of our income to help Erie County senior citizens maintain their independence comes from Erie County tax payers through an **Erie County Senior Services Tax Levy**.

For FY 2010 (October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010) it is projected that Serving Our Seniors will receive \$1,000,000.00 to cover the costs of the work that we do.

Serving Our Seniors **does** apply for local grants. Many times our requests are partially funded – and sometimes fully funded. However, the amount of available grant funding for geriatric social service is small and limited in how it can be used.

Serving Our Seniors does accept private donations and can target the use of the donated money to the donor's specific wishes.

If I Wanted to Give... What Could I Give To?



(L) Barb Hanck, Executive Director of the Sandusky/Erie County Community Foundation with (R) Sue Daugherty, Director of Serving Our Seniors

At the Sandusky/Erie County Community Foundation we have a **Serving Our Seniors Fund**. There is more than \$10,000 in the fund right now. As the fund grows Serving Our Seniors gets the interest income off of the principal and uses it to fund our work.

The larger the **Serving Our Seniors Fund** at the Sandusky/Erie County Community Foundation, the more income Serving Our Seniors will receive.



Another way to donate is this... Donors can make a donation directly to any of Serving Our Seniors' programs. 100% of that donation will be used specifically for that purpose. Here is a list of our programs for helping senior citizens to maintain their independence:

- Handyman Program
- Share A Ride Transportation Program
- Problem-Solving
- Senior Advocate
- Rural Hot Home Delivered Meals
- The Medicine Fund (we buy medications to treat diabetes, cataracts, & glaucoma)
- Out of Town Medical Transportation
- Ramps
- Emergency Home Repair

HELP WITH MEDICARE PART D

Don't assume that if you were happy with your Medicare Part D prescription insurance this year, that you will be happy with same plan in 2010.

Did you receive a letter from your prescription insurance plan telling you that they will be changing your coverage? Most people throw these letters away, without reading them – thinking its junk mail. But it's not!

Do yourself a favor and don't find out the hard way that your prescription drug coverage isn't what it use to be. Call Serving Our Seniors (419-624-1856 or 800-564-1856) and ask for a Medicare Part D appointment. We will send you a form to complete. You will need to return it 7 days before your appointment. When you meet with one of the staff they will be able to tell you which Medicare Part D plan will offer you the best coverage for the specific medicines that you take. There is no fee for this service.

Why Donate To Serving Our Seniors?



Sadie Decker, CPA - Payne, Nickles & Company

Charitable contributions are crucial to not-for-profit, 501 (c) (3) organizations like Serving Our Seniors. Charitable contributions can take many forms such as cash, non-cash assets, or volunteer time.

I'm going to explain how making cash donations can be beneficial to *you!* Charitable contributions to Serving Our Seniors, Inc. may be tax deductible on your income tax return. Charitable contributions are generally deductible in the year made. The deduction for cash contributions is limited to 50% of your adjusted gross income.

You can carry over the unused charitable deduction that you are not able to deduct in the current year because they exceed your adjusted-gross-income limits. The amount can be carried over to each of the next 5 years until it is used, but not beyond that time.

To be able to deduct a cash contribution of less than \$250 one of the following items must be kept showing the name of the organization, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution:

- A canceled check
- Bank or credit card statement
- A receipt from the organization
- A payroll deduction record

You can claim a deduction of a contribution more than \$250 if you have a written acknowledgement.

(Author's note: This article is not intended to offer professional tax advice. Please consult your tax advisor.)

Out of Town Medical Transportation



Rich Gordon, Vol. Driver; John & Gwen Hufnagle

My name is John Hufnagle. Not long ago, I needed to be driven to Cleveland University Hospital for two doctor appointments. My wife, Gwen, does not drive in Cleveland, and I had procedures that would not allow me to drive back home.

So I called Serving Our Seniors, who arranged for two volunteer drivers to transport us. Both men were very competent, pleasant, concerned gentleman, who made us feel we were in good hands.

Rich Gordon drove the first time and Georgi Dimitriov the second time. They did an excellent job and we are very grateful for their help. It was clear to us that they give their time because they care. This is how we know... Rich got stuck for a long stay at University Hospital. My procedure took over 4 hours and he was there the whole time. And Georgi is so conscientious. He saw he was running late, so he drove his own car, rather than stopping to get Serving Our Senior's car. He wanted to make sure he arrived to our house on time.

Serving Our Seniors' staff are to be complimented, also. Not only did they set up the transportation and confirm it, they called back again a day before the appointment to reconfirm. About two days after the appointments they called to see if everything went OK. In short, they didn't leave anything to chance. Thank you!! -- John & Gwen



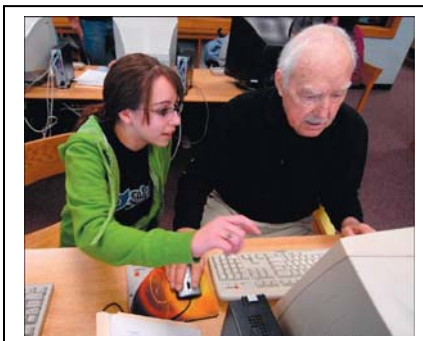
Mike Lippert of Sandusky Volunteers driving the Rural Home Delivered Meal Truck

So what do you do mid-morning during the week? The Erie County Senior Center is in need of 10 pleasant personalities who enjoy driving and making the world a little brighter one day per week from 10 am until 12 or 12:30.

The Rural Hot Home Delivered Meal Program is looking for a few good men & women who are comfortable driving the home delivered meal trucks. Normally, each truck is scheduled with a driver and a rider. So if you don't like to drive, you can ride & assist the driver. The truck stops at individual homes and at redistribution points in Huron and Florence Township.

Do yourself a favor... Call May McClure, Senior Enrichment Director at 419-626-2560 for more information. You'll be glad you did.

Intergenerational Computer Classes Start Mid March 2010



Perkins High School's Intergenerational Computer Class. Sandusky Register Photo 3.12.09

Do you have no computer experience at all? Would you like to learn how to send e-mails, find your grandchildren on FACEBOOK or MY SPACE? Or maybe you have a few skills, but want to learn more. Call Serving Our Seniors because we want you to sign up for the Inter-generational Computer Classes. To participate you must be age 60+, and an Erie County resident.

This project is a "Learn-At-Your-Own-Pace". No tests or quizzes. You just have to enjoy being around the younger generation. Why? Because it will be the Seniors in High School who will be teaching the Senior Citizens computer skills.

Sandusky Fire Department Will Install FREE Smoke Alarms

Do you live in the city limits of Sandusky and own the home you live in? Are you **age 62** or older? Are you a single household with a gross annual income of \$35,450.00. Or maybe you live in a 2 person household with a gross annual income of \$40,500.00. If we just described you, then you should apply for a free smoke detector, supplied by the Sandusky Fire Department. Installation of the smoke alarm is included.

To receive a free smoke alarm does require you to complete an application that does require proof of income and home ownership. Serving Our Seniors will help you complete the application if you need assistance. To apply, call Serving Our Seniors at 419-624-1856.



Sandusky Fire Marshall Rudy Ruiz Coordinator of Smoke Alarm Program