

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Stephanie Sullivan
Executive Director

Beating the Midwinter Health & Home Blues

It's tempting to try hibernating through the next couple of weeks until signs of spring emerge but, according to the National Institute of Health, seniors can be affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder. Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that occurs during the colder months. The cause of the disorder is thought to be lack of ambient light and changes in body temperature. Some seniors at a higher risk are those

who are housebound or those who tend to stay indoors during the long winter months. Signs and symptoms of the disorder include social withdrawal, decreased energy and concentration, lethargic movements, carbohydrate cravings, increased sleep, excessive daytime sleepiness, decreased interest in activities and increased appetite with weight gain. Staying active in the winter months is recommended. Get outdoors if possible and make plans and look forward to the warmer months ahead.

One way that you can stay active and productive right in your own home is to make a midwinter Home Maintenance Check List. Some ideas for the check list are: do end of the year accounting, declutter a closet, replace shelf papers with fresh ones, call the utility company to do an audit (by now you'll have received a big winter heating bill and the audit can show you where you can be more energy efficient), or wander through the house and make a list of needed household repairs. Lastly, call HomePorts ... whether you need a friendly visit, home repair or transportation, we will find someone to help lessen the midwinter health and home blues!

ANNUAL MEETING WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

On January 20th, the Annual Meeting opened with a PowerPoint® presentation narrated by President Muriel Cole. The members and the public were encouraged to ask questions and make comments. Following the Annual Meeting, the Board assembled to honor outgoing Board members and to welcome three new Board members: Jim Donagy, Nancy Holland, and Marty Knight. The new members join present Board members Muriel Cole, Jim Cole, Jane Hukill, Charles Hawkins, Bunny Adams, John Christie, Dr. John Durocher, Sandra Willett Jackson, Louise O'Brien, and Suzanne Street.



Left to right: Jim Donagy, Nancy Holland, & Marty Knight

What's Up?

February 4th

Celebrate Black History Month at Artworks, with an exhibit of oil paintings of historical figures and wood sculptures.

February 3rd & February 10th 9 am to 3 pm

AARP Tax Aide at Upper Shore Aging. Make an appointment.

February 10th, 4 to 5:30 pm
at the Rose O'Neill Literary House at Washington College.
Tea and Talk with Philip Walsh.
"A Possession for All Time: Why Ancient Greek Drama Matters."

February 21st ... Celebrate Presidents' Day!

Save The Date: Symposium on Healthy Aging, March 30th

HomePorts will sponsor a one-day symposium for, and about, seniors titled "Healthy Aging: A Community Perspective," to be held March 30th at Washington College.

Topics to be covered are physical strength, finances, home safety, preventive medicine and care, and practical home modifications for aging in place. Learn the latest research findings and hear tips from local and national experts on topics of interest to our entire community.

A MEDICAL ALARM SYSTEM CAN BRING CRITICAL HELP IF YOU FALL

Falling is a real danger for those 65 or over. Consider these statistics: More than one-third of adults aged 65 years and older fall each year, and the rate of falls increases with age. Accidents are the fifth leading cause of death in older adults, and falls are responsible for two-thirds of these deaths.

If you fall, a medical alarm device can summon help in minutes and could save your life. Medical alarm systems generally involve an around-the-neck pendant (or a device worn on the wrist) and have been around for years. There are dozens of variations available. Some are very expensive and many are not user-friendly. Most have an initial equipment cost, an activation fee, and a monthly fee with a one to two year contract.

Here's what's available locally. Atlantic Security, in Chestertown, offers two options.



Option 1 involves a medical alert pendant and a receiver with two-way communication. If you fall, you press the button on the pendant and a real person answers to ask you what kind of help you need. The system operates inside your house and generally about 1,000 feet in each direction outside, maybe far enough for you to walk your dog. It includes detectors for smoke, gas leaks, fire or flood. It also offers a fall detection option, meaning that if you fall and are unconscious, it will automatically initiate a call for help even if you can't push the button. The installation cost is \$75, plus a one-time charge of \$100 for the fall detection option, and costs \$29.95 a month. The system, Visonic's Amber, is produced by a company headquartered in Israel.

Option 2 is only available to customers who already have an Atlantic Security burglar alarm system. It offers a medical alert system add-on for a one-time charge of \$216 and no monthly fee. If you fall, you press the button and it automatically calls 911. But there is no two-way communication and it only works inside your house.

For either option, Atlantic Security will come to your house, set up the system, test it and show you how it works. To learn more, call 410-778-6112 and talk to James.

Shore Home Care, part of Shore Health System in Easton, offers Philips Lifeline Medical Alert System, produced by a company in the Netherlands. It is similar to Atlantic Security's system, offers two-way communication and works within 1,000 feet of your house. The installation fee is \$60 and the monthly fee is \$40. If you want the fall detection option, it's another \$10 a month. They also come to your house to set up the system and show you how it works. For more information call 410-820-6052 and talk to Carolyn.

Health & Fitness

Will we have more snow this winter? Who knows, but this seems a good time for a few winter safety tips. Stay abreast of weather reports, storm alerts or warnings. Stock up on supplies and remain indoors during a storm.

The American Red Cross suggests having the following on hand:

- water: 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day
- food: 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food, non-electric can opener
- flashlights and batteries
- battery-powered or hand crank radio, extra batteries
- medications (7-day supply) and needed medical items
- cell phone with chargers
- family and emergency contact information
- extra cash
- pet supplies
- sand, rock salt or non-clumping kitty litter for walk ways & steps
- warm clothing, boots & blankets

If you lose your heat:

- Close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels under doors, and cover windows at night.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing.
- If using a fireplace, wood stove, etc., use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.
- Never use gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you often lose power, consider staying with friends or family during stormy times.

Plan and prepare in advance and you should weather the weather!
Happy Winter!

Send Us Your News & Comments

This newsletter is published monthly. We welcome your news and comments. Please submit your article by the 10th of the month preceding publication.