

SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION

Aging Advocate

THE AGING ADVOCATE

WINTER, 2011

REGION A COUNTIES:

Cherokee

Clay

Graham

Haywood

Jackson

Macon

Swain



There is a new service available to the residents of Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties. Operated by United Way of North Carolina, NC **2-1-1** lets you get answers to service questions 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The calls are free and the information you provide is confidential. Any language that you speak can be translated. Information is available about Basic Needs such as food, clothing and shelter, Child Care Services, Counseling, Crisis intervention, Health Care, Housing, Senior Services, Support groups and Volunteer opportunities.

When you dial **2-1-1** you will be connected with a live person; a referral specialist who will take your request and provide you with the number you need. If they cannot provide you with the number, you have multiple service needs, or need more follow up; with your permission, you will be referred to the Community Resource Connection covering your area. This service is made possible through a joint effort by the Duke Energy Foundation and the local County Commissioners in each of the six counties. **2-1-1** became available on November 15, 2011.



The Vision of the Region A Area Agency on Aging is: A full range of service options available in all counties, Well trained, caring staff in all agencies and facilities, Well informed, active, healthy seniors.

CALENDAR

December 1—Provider’s Meeting @ Commission Office—10am

December 23,26—Christmas Holiday Commission Offices Closed

January 2—New Year’s Holiday—Commission Offices Closed

February 9—Advisory Council Meeting @ Commission Office—10am

March 8—Provider’s Meeting @ Commission Office—10am



SAVE THE DATE!
SE4A CONFERENCE
Grove Park Inn in Asheville
September 9-12, 2012



UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

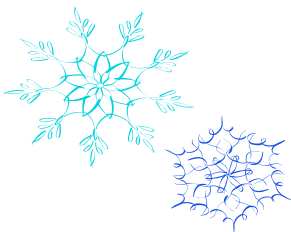
- Virtual Dementia Tour



- Person Centered Training



- CALL TO SCHEDULE



FALL EDUCATION CONFERENCES DEEMED VERY SUCCESSFUL

The Southwestern Commission Area Agency on Aging partnered with the Alzheimer's Association, Western Carolina Chapter, and the Smoky Mountain Center Geriatric Adult Specialty Team and recently offered two very successful fall educational conferences in our Region. Over 100 people attended the conferences, offered in Sylva on November 14th and Murphy on November 15th.

Participants gathered to hear practical information about Initiatives in Research and

Legislation; Medical Management of Alzheimer's and Dementia; Coping with Challenging Behaviors; Legal Issues and Planning, and Caregiver Self-Care. Attendees were also treated to therapeutic laughter and learned how to use hearty, mirthful laughter to boost their immune systems and manage the many stressors associated with being a caregiver of a person with a memory illness.

Participant comments on the conference evaluation forms indicated that the educational event was a home run, with

tons of useful information.

The Southwestern Commission Area Agency on Aging wishes to thank the Alzheimer's Association, Western Carolina Chapter for its commitment to serving the residents of Western North Carolina. We share their vision, *"A world without Alzheimer's disease."*



Candlelight Reflections 2011: Region A Honors Family Caregivers

Each November, North Carolina pauses to observe National Family Caregiver Month. Since 2006, Region A's HCCBG providers, area churches, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians have observed Na-

tional Family Caregiver Month with a variety of Candlelight Reflections events. This year was no exception. The events this year ranged from special events at senior centers, Adult Day programs and nutrition sites,

as well as moving ceremonies in local churches.



Candlelight Reflections



to honor, hope and remember...

alzheimer's association®
nc family caregiver support program



"Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born."

~ Dale Turner



HOLIDAY HINTS



The holiday season is a time for visiting and reconnecting with family, friends and neighbors. Sometimes this season can be sad or stressful for those caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease (AD). These hints are our gift in wishing you an enjoyable holiday season.

Holidays can be meaningful, enriching times for both the person with AD and family. Maintaining (or adapting) old family rituals and traditions helps all family members feel a sense of belonging and family identity. For a person with AD, this link with a familiar past is reassuring and builds self-esteem, i.e. "Look at the beautiful family I created!"

Set your own limits early, and be clear about them with others. You do not have to live up to the expectations of friends or relatives. Your situation is different now.

Encourage family and friends to visit **EVEN IF IT IS PAINFUL FOR THEM.** Keep the number of persons visiting at one time to a minimum, or try a few people visiting quietly with the person with AD in a separate room. Most people with AD can pull it together for brief periods, if they have adequate private rest in between.

Try some simple holiday preparation with the person with AD several days ahead. Just observing your preparations will familiarize him/her with the upcoming festivities; if they participate with you, they experience the pleasure of helping and giving as well as the fun of anticipation and reminiscing.

Prepare potential quiet distractions (a family photo album or a simple repetitive chore like cracking nuts) to use if the person with AD becomes upset or over-stimulated.

Try to avoid situations that further confuse or frustrate many people with AD:

- crowds of people who expect the person with AD to remember them
- noise, loud conversations or loud music
- strange or different surroundings
- changes in light intensity, too bright or too dark
- over-indulgence in rich or special food or drink (especially alcohol)
- change in regular routine and sleep patterns

Try scheduling activities, especially some outdoor exercise, early in the day to avoid the fatigue from added activity at the end of a long day. Familiar holiday music, story-telling, singing or church services (even on TV) may be especially enjoyable.

If you receive invitations to holiday celebrations which the person with AD cannot attend, **GO YOURSELF.** Enjoy the chance to be with friends and family who love you and enjoy your company, with or without your relative.

Preparing the Guests

Explain as clearly as possible what has happened to the person with AD. Give examples of the unusual behaviors that may take place: incontinence, eating food with fingers, wandering, hallucinations.

Explain that it may not be appropriate behavior but the person with AD has a memory loss and does not remember what is expected and acceptable.

Remind the visitor through phone calls or letters to be understanding and not to shun the person with AD.

If this is the first visit since the person with AD became severely impaired, tell the visitor the visit may be painful. The memory-impaired person may not remember the guest's name or relationship.

Explain that memory loss is the result of the disease and it is not intentional.

Stress with the guests that what is important is the meaningfulness of the moment spent together and not what the person remembers.

Preparing the Memory-Impaired Person

Begin showing a picture of the guest to the person a week before the arrival.

Spend more time each day explaining who the visitor is while showing the picture.

Arrange a phone call for the person with AD and the visitor. The conversation may help both. The call gives the visitor an idea what to expect and gives the memory-impaired person an opportunity to familiarize him/herself with the visitor.

Keep the memory-impaired person's routine as close to normal as possible.

During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, guard against fatigue and find time for adequate rest.





Laughter Really is The Best Medicine!



The holidays give many of us the HICAs: a heebie-jeebie mish-mash of emotions with the ominous realization *Here It Comes Again*. From October through New Year's the holidays pile up. Many of us get tied in emotional knots caught up between commercial rat-race exhortations, memories, social pressures, family "shoulds" and limited financial resources.

October, November, and December make up the most difficult, emotionally-loaded quarter of the year. More than any other time, this particular string of holidays and seasonal changes brings a boat-load of mixed emotions such as nostalgia, sentimentality, melodrama, bittersweet celebrations, poignancy, sadness, loss, and homesickness. And there is the added pressure of decision such as what presents to buy, for whom, how much can you afford to spend, and who to visit when. No wonder we call these three months emotionally loaded.

It isn't necessary to sing those old holiday blues this year. In fact, here are some simple ways to beat the holiday blues:

- 1) Join a laughter circle or laughter club.
- 2) Tell people how you feel. Do not isolate yourself.
- 3) Give yourself and everyone else permission to feel less than perfect.
- 4) Talk openly to a trusted friend or family member.
- 5) Get some exercise.
- 6) Avoid excessive use of drugs or alcohol.
- 7) Do something you're good at.
- 8) Function within your routine.
- 9) Do something nice for yourself.
- 10) Look at your unhappy feelings logically.
- 11) Stay away from depressed or emotionally upset people.
- 12) Give yourself some quiet time.
- 13) Maintain contact with your counselor or support group.
- 14) Keep your holiday expectations realistic. Expect the intensity of holiday togetherness to breed some irritability, and take it in stride.
- 15) Give added attention to the things you enjoy.
- 16) Don't take on more responsibility than you can comfortably handle.
- 17) Skip the commercialized pressures. Don't go into debt for gift-giving. Give what represents the real spirit of the season: your time, attention, and caring.
- 18) Negotiate to get a reasonable amount of whatever you need (time, attention, support). At the same time, be flexible about the way things are done. Build some change into family rituals.
- 19) Engage in prayer or meditation that suits you. Try it both alone and in community.

Even if you're not caring for a person with AD, the tips on the preceding page offer plenty of powerful ways to help you keep your balance. Use these as well as the tips on the preceding page, incorporate hearty, mirthful laughter into your daily life, and you'll find it much easier to remember the spirit of the season without getting caught up in the commercialism. Why, maybe you will actually find yourself whistling a happy tune!

If you'd like to schedule a Therapeutic Laughter session for your organization, contact Certified Laughter Leader, Cindy Miles.



Studies have shown that approximately 80% of Americans would prefer to die at home, if possible. Despite this, 60% of Americans die in acute care hospitals, 20% in nursing homes, and only 20% at home. Only 3 out of 10 Americans have a living will, a map detailing where they want their health care to “go” in the future should they be unable to voice their wishes. Few Americans know their end of life options or how they’re funded, and fewer still have discussed their desires with physicians and family.

“Consider the Conversation, a documentary on a taboo subject,” is being shown **AT NO CHARGE** at the following times and locations:

<p>December 6, 2011 6:00 p.m. Marianna Black Library 33 Fryemont Street Bryson City, NC 28713</p>	<p>December 14, 2011 11:00 a.m. AND 4:00 p.m. Jackson County Public Library 310 Keener Street Sylva, NC 28779</p>
<p>December 8, 2011 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. Albert Carlton-Cashiers Community Library 249 Frank Allen Road Cashiers, NC 28717</p>	<p>December 16, 2011 11:00 a.m. Hudson Library 554 Main Street Highlands, NC 28741</p>
<p>December 12, 2011 11:00 a.m. AND 6:00 p.m. Macon County Public Library 149 Siler Farm Road Franklin, NC 28734</p>	

Co-sponsored by:



SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF THE WESTERN COMMUNITY RESOURCE CONNECTION (CRC)

During the last two weeks of October, a very successful event was held in each of the four Western Counties to officially launch the opening of the Western Community Connection (CRC). These events were held at the Graham County Senior Center on October 17, the J Robert Penland Senior Center in Murphy on October 18, the Clay County Senior Center on October 20, and the Swain County Senior Center on October 26th. The main office of the CRC will be in the White Plaza in Andrews, but the staff will be in each county on a regular basis to respond to questions from the public.

The purpose of the CRC is to provide Information and Referral, Access, and Assisting in helping the citizens of Cherokee, Clay, Graham and Swain Counties in finding and receiving services that they need.

If you have a need and don't know where to go to find help, please give the CRC a call at 321-0500 in Cherokee, Clay and Graham Counties and 488-7852 in Swain County. The local number in Swain County has been made available by the Swain County Commissioners.

CRC Staff will also be trained as SHIIP Counselors to be able to help folks with Medicare questions.

They will assist people who have recently been discharged from the hospital to be able to stay out of the hospital and not have to go back within thirty days. This is made possible by making sure they have a way to get to follow up Doctors visits, are able to get their medications, and have someone to encourage them to follow the Doctors orders.

The CRC will also provide information to folks in the Nursing Homes who indicate an interest in returning to the community after they have been in the Nursing Home for more than ninety days. They must be referred to the CRC through a process used by the Nursing Home Discharge Planner.

It was once said, "you can't understand someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes." That was never more true than in the case of trying to understand someone living with Alzheimer's disease or related memory illnesses.

The Southwestern Commission Area Agency on Aging now offers an opportunity for individuals to get a first-hand glimpse of living with dementia. The Virtual Dementia Tour™ is a scientifically proven method of training to change the perception of aging.



Designed to build sensitivity and awareness in individuals caring for those with Dementia, the Virtual Dementia Tour™ is a Dementia simulation experience created for anyone seeking to understand the physical and mental challenges of those with Dementia.

This impactful experience was recently featured on local news (http://www.wlos.com/shared/newsroom/features/absolute-le/videos/wlos_vid_416.shtml#.ToNnXASQf40.email). To learn more about the VDT and see national news coverage, visit www.secondwind.org/vdt/.

If you would like to schedule a Virtual Dementia Tour™ for your organization or community, contact Cindy Miles at 828-586-1962, ext. 218 or e-mail: cindy@regiona.org.



**Dementia is not
merely a problem
of memory.**

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The Area Agency on Aging Staff is available to provide Training to facility staff, community groups, agencies, family caregivers, etc. on a wide variety of topics which include: Residents Rights, Life is Good-Dealing with Grief & Loss, Accepting The Challenge (Dementia), Virtual Dementia Tour™, Elder Abuse, Attending to the Spiritual Needs of Family Caregivers, Respecting Choices-Advance Care Planning, Caregiving 101: Positive Techniques for Dealing with Caregiver Stress, Finding Common Ground in Family Disagreements, Laugh Your Way to Health (Therapeutic Laughter) What is Normal Aging? (sensitivity training); Making Your Home More Accessible, Living Healthy, Living Healthy with Diabetes, Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Arthritis Foundation Walk with Ease Program, Arthritis Foundation Tai Chi Program, Matter of Balance, and Hand Washing Techniques. We also provide training on Senior Medicare Patrol, Schemes and Scams, Retirement Ready, and Savvy Saving Seniors. Contact your AAA staff to schedule the training that you want more information about.

www.regiona.org

