



Retiree Review

Oregon ARA will be the premiere organization on issues affecting retirement security

Attend an Oregon ARA meeting

Don't miss the next ARA meeting! Did you know that every Oregon ARA membership meeting includes a speaker – someone with something interesting to say, something important to our lives! Don't miss a meeting, you will miss some good information.

Meetings begin at 10 am and are held at Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd (just off SE Milwaukie Blvd.). Tri-Met routes 19, 33, 41, and 99 make stops nearby. Route 19 stops right in front of the building.

Are you ready for the digital age?

On February 17, 2009, the world will transition to digital television (DTV). A US Senate Aging Committee investigation previously found this will have a disproportionate effect on seniors. Are you ready? At our

October 25 meeting, Steven Bass, President of OPB will lead an in-depth discussion of the issue and what's available to seniors to convert their televisions.

For a schedule of meetings, see the Calendar on page 3.

Seniors quit drugs

Many seniors quit taking drugs for chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure when they exceed their drug plan's yearly spending limits, according to a newly published study.

The study was done by The Rand Corporation using enrollees in a national private health plan, and appeared in the September issue of Health Affairs. It said that a significant number of seniors do not resume their prescription medications when drug benefits resume at the start of a new health plan year, nor do they switch to the lower priced generic version. While people were less likely to quit using generic drugs once they reached benefit caps, no widespread move to the lower-cost alternatives was noted.

Researchers and policy experts believe
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Rebuilding New Orleans

The need for volunteers is still great in the New Orleans and Gulf Coast areas. Since last December Ken Hennrich, CMM, CMP, Second Vice-President of the Oregon Alliance for American Retirees has spent a total of fourteen weeks (five trips) in New Orleans helping residents rebuild their homes flooded by Hurricane Katrina and the resulting levee breaks.

Though Hennrich is handy he's not a professional in any of the trades in the home building industry. So, what does that mean? It means that everyone even remotely handy with their hands can help, especially retirees, who may have a little time to give to their fellow Americans.

Hennrich has been working to secure an agency in the Gulf Coast region that could coordinate potential volunteers through a national "push" for willing and capable volunteers. The contact numbers he located, for a large volunteer effort will be located at the end of this article.

Since we last reported on Hennrich's work in early Summer, he made another

(Continued on page 3)

Join the Oregon Prescription Drug Program (OPDP)

Oregon residents should become aware of the Oregon Prescription Drug Program (OPDP). The free program, passed by the 2007 Legislature, is in place and open to every person in the state of Oregon.

Every Oregon resident may join the OPDP purchasing pool to get the best price possible with their free card.

If you do not have health insurance, you qualify; if you already have insurance and the drug costs more using your present insurance than it does by using the OPDP card – you're underinsured. To qualify for this program you must:

- Be an Oregon resident with no prescription drug coverage other than Medicare Part D, if applicable, OR an Oregon resident who considers themselves underinsured for prescription drug coverage.
- Enroll online at www.opdp.org or by calling customer service at 1-800-913-4146.
- A parent may enroll a child using one of these options; a guardian, personal representative or attorney-in-fact may enroll a person in the same ways.

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Oregon ARA members visited Representative Wu (l-4) Verna Porter, Wu, Joan Miller, Marcia Keck (photo courtesy Rep. Wu's office)

Legislative Conference Report

By Verna Porter, Oregon ARA President, and
Steve Kofahl, AFGA Local 3937



Washington ARA President Art Bolton and I led our state delegations in a busy and productive Labor Day week in Washington D.C. at the Legislative Conference. Over 600 Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) members from around the Country learned what needs to be done to prepare for the 2008 election year, heard from lawmakers and Presidential candidates, and educated their elected representatives in a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill about issues that matter to Northwest seniors.

Alliance President George Kourpias welcomed us with a call to action behind the theme "Building for America's Future," urging us to work for change not only to improve condi-

tions for our generation, but also for those who will follow us. National Democratic Party Senate and Congressional Campaign Committee Directors J.B. Poersch and Mark Wolff displayed the political map and key races for next year, including those in our own Northwest battleground states. The effort to unseat Oregon incumbent Republican Senator Gordon Smith is getting a great deal of attention. Mr. Poersch extolled the abilities and achievements of Jeff Merkley, the likely challenger to Mr. Smith.

AFL-CIO President Sweeney, Executive Vice-President Chavez-Thompson, and Secretary-Treasurer Trumka all took time to speak to us, emphasizing the importance of the senior vote. Senator Hillary Clinton expressed her support for Social Security and health care reform. Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and Elizabeth Edwards (appearing on behalf of former Senator John Edwards), detailed their progressive health care plans and called for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

Workshops educated us about health care, prepared us to engage in coalition-building back home, and showed us how to get our message to the local media. Instructors and participants shared their experiences and knowledge, and it became clear that hundreds of ARA activists are ready and able to go to work on a nationwide grassroots campaign.

Lobby Day was very productive, as we were armed with ARA talking points about income security and health care needs for retirees and their families. Many of us have established good working relationships with our elected representatives and their staff. Even though Congress was just back in session following the August recess, with lots of work to do, Senator Wyden as well as Congressmen McDermott, Dicks, and Wu still made time to meet with us in person. Their interest is a testament to the work that we have been doing on Capitol Hill and at home to make sure that the ARA message is heard loud and clear.

Early next year we will come together again in Regional meetings to prepare for the most important elections of our lifetimes, as we move to take back America for working families and retirees, and end the nightmare of Bush II.

(Continued from page 1 - Oregon Prescription Drug Program)

Although the OPDP discounts are market competitive, if you have a drug benefit you may also have a discount that could offer an equal or better rate on a specific prescription.

All prescriptions prescribed by a licensed Oregon clinician are eligible for a discount. This program does not give discounts for over-the-counter drugs.

You can call 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227) or your Medicare health plan for questions about your Medicare options. **You can also call the Senior Health Insurance Benefit Assistance (SHIBA) program at 1-800-722-4134 for assistance.**

(Continued from page 1 - Seniors quit drugs)

the study provides insight into how seniors may act under provisions of Medicare's Part D drug benefit plan. Spending limits contained in the benefit are expected to leave between 24 and 38 percent of enrollees without drug coverage for part of each benefit year.

RAND researchers studied prescription drug use from 2003 to 2005 among more than 60,000 people enrolled in the health plan. Enrollees had a choice of two plans that offered annual drug benefit caps of \$1,000 or \$2,500 and one drug plan that had no limit. Participants had a co-pay in each plan.

The study examined use of drugs used to treat high blood pressure, cardiac problems, diabetes, ulcers and antidepressants. They also studied prescription pain medications that have over-the-counter substitutes.

About 6 to 13 percent of the people enrolled in plans with caps reached their spending limits in each of the years, with about half the going without benefits for more than 90 days, according to the study.

Discontinuation rates differed by type of drug, ranging from 15 percent for anti-cholesterol medication to 28 percent for cardiac drugs. Rates were higher for pain medications and anti-ulcer drugs where over-the-counter alternatives were available.

Dana Goldman, the study's senior author, was distressed at the low resumption rates. "Drug caps are a cost-saving measure, but our findings raise the issue of whether in the long run they may lead to other medical costs such as increased hospitalizations."

The Alliance for Retired Americans

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trip working to rebuild a duplex/townhouse unit and a home in the Gentilly area of New Orleans that belongs to a 101 year old widow waiting for "Road Home funds." As Hennrich said: "This volunteer work has been one of the most satisfying experiences that I have had in my 64 years of being on this planet." He added: "We (Alliance for Retired Americans members) have the ability (even if it's only a couple of weeks a year) to bring New Orleans and the Gulf Coast back – bigger, better and stronger than ever".

Volunteers receive great hospitality and much thankfulness of the residents. It is a great experience! Is it perfect? No. Is it worthwhile work? Absolutely! This is an opportunity to affect many people's lives in a way that will make a real difference. Hennrich's feeling is we can do it, and benefit in the process.

Hennrich has been a part of the hospitality and tourism industry for 20 years, and is convinced that with New Orleans' history we must get these people back on their feet. The French Quarter is in fine shape, but needs more people to work the businesses. Those individuals would occupy the neighborhoods that were so devastated during the hurricane and resulting flood.

Considering we went to the moon in 1969, have made incredible progress in space travel and yet can't seem to get the New Orleans/Gulf Coast rebuilt to any real degree is unbelievable. It is Hennrich's understanding there are approximately 10,000 houses that need rebuilding, not counting any of the pre-Katrina public housing.

Hennrich purchased his own airline tickets and has had the opportunity to live in the home he is rebuilding. Not every volunteer will have the opportunity to live under the same conditions. However, he has contact numbers for volunteer camps that can house up to 150 people in dorm style rooms with amenities like air-conditioning, heat, indoor showers and toilets as well as laundry facilities. There is no charge for housing; however a donation of \$25 per person is suggested. In addition, RV slots (requiring advance reservations) are available at the two camps, one in New Orleans and one in Biloxi, Mississippi.

If you are interested in donating some time, here is contact information for the two camps: Camp Restore, 9301 Chef Mentour Hwy., New Orleans, LA 70127, 504-242-2636 www.camprestore.org, OR Camp Biloxi, 1996 Pass Road, Biloxi, MS 39531, 228-594-0008, campbiloxi@cablone.org.

Hennrich adds: "Imagine all of the people that need our caring and compassion! Let's just get it done or at least get a sizable number on the road to recovery. The folks in the south deserve respect and we have the ability to give them that and more!"

Oregon ARA members visited Senator Wyden (l—r Val Jack, Howard Owens, Joan Miller, Wyden, Verna Porter (foreground) Barney Gorter (photo courtesy Val Jack)



Ballot Measure 50—a vote for *Healthy Kids*

This November, voters will face a choice on the ballot: Kids or Big Tobacco? We will be asked to vote on the *Healthy Kids* program, Measure 50. Backers of the measure think that Measure 50, the *Healthy Kids* plan, makes sense for Oregon's families and economy. There are many reasons why *Healthy Kids* makes sense, but here are three:

1. Insures 100,000 Kids: Measure 50 will guarantee health care for 100,000 uninsured Oregon children whose working parents earn too much to qualify for the existing Oregon Health Plan but too little to afford private health insurance on their own – or whose employers don't provide health insurance at all.
2. Lowers Health Care Costs: For every dollar invested in tobacco prevention, the state saves \$3 in health care costs. The Tobacco Industry has spent millions of dollars trying to defeat similar measures across the country.
3. Saves in Long Run: Health care costs continue to increase. Measure 50 will save on reduced tobacco-related health costs, and a reduced number of emergency room visits by the uninsured for routine medical care.

You'll hear plenty of arguments on both sides, and you should consider the source of these messages:

Who's supporting *Healthy Kids*? Good guys and health care advocates such as the Oregon ARA, the Oregon AFL-CIO, unions, the American Cancer Society, the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council, the American Lung Association of Oregon, Children First for Oregon, the American Heart Association, Oregon Nurses Association and the Oregon Business Association.

Who's Opposing *Healthy Kids*? Big Tobacco is virtually alone in spending millions against *Healthy Kids*. When you see TV ads attacking this measure, remember who's behind them.

Please be sure that you and your family members are registered to vote and be sure to vote in November. You can download a Voter Registration Form by visiting the Oregon ARA website at www.orara.org.

Calendar of Events

- | Sept. 27—Membership Meeting **
- | Oct. 11—Board Meeting *
- | Oct. 25—Membership Meeting **
- | Nov. 8—Board Meeting *
- | Nov. 29—Membership Meeting **
- | Dec. 13—Board *
- | Dec. 27—Annual Holiday Lunch, Steamers Restaurant, 8303 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland
- | Mar. 24-26, 2008—ARA Western Regional Conference, Ballys, Las Vegas, NV
- | * NOLC, 11th & Madison
- | ** Westmoreland Union Manor, 6404 SE 23rd

Membership Application/Oregon ARA Financial Contributor



YES! I want to join the Alliance and help protect Social Security and Medicare for generations to come. Enclosed is \$10 for a one-year individual/couple membership. (Payable annually) New Renewal

I would like to become a Financial Contributor to the Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans by enclosing \$_____ to the Oregon Alliance to help fund organization activities.

Please print:

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email address: _____

Union Name & Number (if applicable): _____ Date _____

Make your check or money order payable to **Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans** and mail with this form to: **Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans, 4125 NE 72nd, Portland, OR 97218-3616**

Northwest ARA members participate in Legislative Conference in DC



* Photo courtesy Val Jack: ** Photo courtesy William Bennett



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