



The ADRC E-Newsletter may also be viewed as a PDF at www.PierceADRC.org “News & Events.”

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Aging and LTC Providers Network

First Thursday of each month, 8 – 9 a.m.
Lighthouse Senior Center, 5016 E. “A” Street, Tacoma
Contact [Bob Riler](#), ADR, 798-7384
Dec 3 – Ombudsman Program – Patricia Hunter, State LTC Ombudsman
Jan 7 – Virtual Dementia Tour – Ben Solomon, Right at Home

Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County

Second Thursday of each month, 7:45 – 9 a.m.
Narrows Glen, 8201 Sixth Ave, Tacoma
(Breakfast \$6; Coffee \$2)
Contact Melissa Martin at (253) 752-6870
Dec 10 – Annual Holiday Party
Jan 14 – Safe Travels for Seniors

East County Providers Network

Third Tuesday of each month, 8 a.m.
Location varies monthly.
Contact Laura Fehrenbacher, Stafford Suites, (253) 862-1818 or lauraf@staffordcare.com

SASH Coffee and Networking for Pierce County

Ports of Call Restaurant
First Wednesday of each month, 8:30 – 10 a.m.
Dec 2 – La Quinta Inn Tacoma, 1425 E. 27th St.
Contact Rebecca Bomann at Rebecca@sashservices.com or (206) 501-4375

South End (King County) Coalition

Third Wednesday of each month at 7:45 – 9:30 a.m.
Dec 16 – Wesley Homes Lea Hill Campus, 32049 109th Pl. SE, Auburn
Schedule of meeting locations and times at www.secoalition.com

Aging Smart – Gig Harbor

Third Thursday of each month at 9 – 10 a.m.
Harbor Place - Dining Room, 1016 29th St NW, Gig Harbor
Call (253) 509-2340 or [e-mail](#) for Aging Smart info or relocations

LOCAL SERVICES

Weatherization & Home Repair Services in City of Tacoma

MDC offers free weatherization and home repair services to low income residents within Tacoma. The aim is to decrease energy costs and keep families warm. Weatherization is available to rental units (landlord approved) and owner occupied housing. Income limit is \$2,180 for single and \$2,850 couple. Call for larger households and more info at (253) 593-2336. Home repair for residents 60 and older or disabled. Income limit is \$2,071 for single and \$2,367 couple. Call for larger households and more info at (253) 591-7020.

Sign Up for Winter Alerts

Don't be caught off guard. Snow, ice, flooding and wind storms can cause havoc, knock down trees, cut power and make winter a mess. Visit www.piercecountywa.org/winterwise to sign up for alerts and learn how to prepare for the season ahead.

Applications Still Open for Rebuilding Day

Rebuilding Together South Sound is still accepting applications for home repairs or modifications from low income seniors, people with disabilities or families with children. On April 25 hundreds of volunteer tradespeople spend the day doing all kinds of repairs, from plumbing, electrical, and carpentry, to repairing roofs, windows, and flooring. To apply or request more information call (253) 238-0977 or [visit online to download the application](#). Apply as soon as possible! A large crew and a full day can transform a home.

Volunteers Key to Tax Assistance Program

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) provides free basic tax return preparation for eligible taxpayers. Volunteers are the program's most valuable resource by helping individuals claim their Earned Income Tax Credit and bring millions of dollars back into our community. They provide high quality service and uphold the highest of ethical standards. No experience is required. Free IRS tax training is provided. Flexible hours including days, evenings and weekends at convenient locations throughout Pierce County. Apply at www.VolunteerTaxHelp.org or contact Amy at (253) 426-1516 or amya@associatedministries.org.

Learn About Medicare

Medicare is complex. Always has been, probably always will be. Knowing the ins and outs can be important to making the most of your Medicare benefits – especially if you are new to Medicare or soon to be enrolled. Join SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) for a 2½ hour class to learn everything you need to know about Medicare.

- Dec 12 – 12:30 p.m. at the University Place Library, 3609 Market Place W., University Place
- Dec 19 – 10:00 a.m. at the South Hill Library, 15420 Meridian East, Puyallup.

Please RSVP at (253) 596-0918.

- Don't forget, Medicare open enrollment for the 2016 calendar year ends December 7. To reach a free, unbiased SHIBA counselor or to get a list of SHIBA in person counseling sites, call Pierce County SHIBA @ (253) 596-0918 or Statewide @ 1-800-562-6900

Meet Author Dorothy Wilhelm

Dorothy Wilhelm, a columnist for "The News Tribune" for 25 years, has collected her favorite columns into a new book, "Better Every Day." She will be on hand at two Pierce County Libraries to read from her book, a humorous look at joyful living after 50.

Dec. 12, 1 p.m. at [Sumner Pierce County Library](#), 1116 Fryar Ave.

Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at [University Place Pierce County Library](#), 3609 Market Place W., Suite 100

Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing. These free events are sponsored by Friends of the Libraries. Contact [Beth Luce](#) or (253) 548-3353

KING 5 News Examines Last of the Institutions

Reporter Susannah Frame has taken a look at formal, long term care institutions – the good and the bad. Segments in this multipart series include:

Part 1: [Washington state decades behind in serving developmentally disabled](#)

Part 2: [Do jobs trump experts in debate over state's developmentally disabled?](#)

Part 3: [Closing institutions would be 'devastating,' say advocates](#)

Part 4: [Institutions costing taxpayers a 'fortune'](#)

Autism and DDA Eligibility: The DSM Effect

Families applying for DDA eligibility for a child with an autism diagnosis say the process can be confusing and overwhelming, especially now that there's a new DSM that comes with a different set of criteria. With help from DDA's eligibility gurus, Informing Families has created a basic primer on what DDA looks for when it comes to an autism diagnosis under both the DSM IV-TR and the new DSM 5, as well as how to help DDA get all the information it needs to make a determination. Read all about [Autism and DDA Eligibility: The DSM Effect](#) (includes a printable version for download).

Harmony Hill Plans 2016 Cancer Retreats

Three-day retreats at Harmony Hill's beautiful campus in Union, WA provide support and connection to help individuals facing the challenges of cancer facilitate their own healing. The program offers general retreats (open to all adults) and specialty retreats that serve specific populations. For a list of upcoming 2016 retreats, please [click here](#):

HCPC Warms Hearts with Donations

The Health Care Providers Council of Pierce County will donate \$16,000 this year to a variety of senior centers and community non-profits and organizations at the group's annual HCPC holiday party on December 10 at Narrows Glen Retirement Community. HCPC raised funds throughout the year with various activities and events.

Clothing Drive Helps Veterans

The National Alliance to end Veterans Suicide is having their annual clothing drive to help our homeless veterans on Saturday December 12 and 19 at the Krispie Kreme's Doughnut Shop on the edge of the Tacoma mall from 9 a.m-4 p.m. The donations needed include all sizes of men's and women's clothing, new socks, tee shirts, and underwear as well as new and or used blankets, sleeping bags and single sheets of tarp. December 18 is the annual dinner at American Lake in Bldg. 9. Groups or organizations can purchase a table for \$200 (tax deductible) to seat 10 veterans for Christmas Dinner. All organizations who have participated in the dinner event will be read aloud prior to the dinner. Contact Crestina Marez at (253) 272-5397.

Vendors for Annual Caregiver Conference

The annual "Giving Care, Taking Care" caregiver conference is scheduled for June 6, 2016 and will draw over 400 participants. The event includes a Resource Exhibitor Fair for providers to introduce businesses and services to a broad consumer base. Conference activities have been planned to permit maximum opportunities for interaction between exhibitors and participants. For more information and an application form contact John Mikel at (253) 798-2823 or jmikel@co.pierce.wa.us.

LGBT 50+ Grief Support Group

Are you experiencing a loss in your life? Loss can take multiple forms - death of a spouse or close friend, loss due to a separation or breakup, loss due to various addictions, loss of a beloved pet, loss of a job etc. This is not a therapy group, but individuals coming together to talk about our loss and our process. This group was developed based on a need for the LGBT community. While the group mainly focuses on the 50+ older LGBT adult and their unique challenges as they grow older, we never turn anyone away who needs support. Held 3rd Wed. of each month, 5:30-7:30pm at PCAF. Contact Pat at patricia@tacomaolderlgbt.org for more information.

Homeless Inclement Weather Declarations

As the harsh weather approaches, people may hear about "inclement weather declarations." During this time it is expected all participating shelters in Pierce County will expand to meet maximum

capacity. The City of Tacoma will call for an Inclement Weather Season which will last until March 31. Many shelters will expand their shelter beds for this season to serve as many as possible. The City of Tacoma will also send out a notification to all providers and jurisdictions in Pierce County by 10 a.m. This will occur when at least one of the following occurs: 1) Weather forecast below 32 degrees; 2) Weather forecast below 35 degrees and windy/rainy or 3) Any Severe Weather Alert has been called. During this time all shelters will expand their numbers to reach capacity.

Fantasy Lights Special

Pierce County Parks and Recreation is holding “Fantasy Lights at Spanaway Park,” the largest holiday drive-through display in the Northwest, featuring nearly 300 elaborate displays and thousands of sparkling lights. The beautiful two-mile drive along Spanaway Lake has become a memorable lakeside tradition for the entire family. This year enjoy Special Half Price Nights (\$7) on Dec. 1, 2, 7, 8, & 9. (Coupons cannot be combined with/on half price nights.)

SCAM OF THE MONTH

Free Phones for Veterans? Not quite.

You walk out of a VA facility, and see a booth with people offering free phones and cell service for veterans, all thanks to a government program. It sounds compelling, right? “Free” might end up costing you a lot of money. The FTC has heard about booths like these – and what happens next. Months later, veterans who signed up for the program get notices saying they need to provide personal information and documents to prove they meet the income requirements – something the people pitching the program never mentioned. Many veterans find that their incomes are too high to qualify for the program, and face losing service or paying for something they thought would be free. [Read more.](#)

Did You Miss Your Jury Duty?

Pierce County Jury Administration reports a spike in jury scams locally. These scams typically target seniors. This is not a new scam but it resurfaces from time to time. The senior gets a call from someone claiming to be an officer representing the court, insisting that an arrest warrant has been issued for failing to appear for jury duty. The then demand that the senior pay hundreds or thousands of dollars with a cashier’s check to cover the warrant and clear their name. If anyone receives such a call, hang up immediately. It’s a scam!

RECOMMENDED READS FOR THE 50+

The Theft of Memory: Losing my Father, One Day at a Time

In the most personal book of his career, Dr. Harry Kozol tells the story of his father's life and work as a nationally noted specialist in disorders of the brain and his astonishing ability, at the onset of Alzheimer's disease, to explain the causes of his sickness and then to narrate, step-by-step, his slow descent into dementia. The Theft of Memory is at once a tender tribute to a father from his son and a richly colored portrait of a devoted doctor who lived more than a century. Call Number: 616.831 KOZOL. (Pierce County Library System)

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Dec 1 – Giving Tuesday

Now in its fourth year, [#GivingTuesday](#) is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. Observed on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving (in the U.S.) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday, [#GivingTuesday](#) kicks off the charitable

season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving. Since its inaugural year in 2012, [#GivingTuesday](#) has become a movement that celebrates and supports giving and philanthropy with events throughout the year and a growing catalog of resources. Remember your favorite charity, non-profit or community-based organization.

Dec 2 – State Plan for Independent Living Public Hearing

The Washington State Independent Living Council (WASILC) is partnering with the Center for Independence (CFI) to host a public hearing. The hearing will gather information to develop a three year (2017-2019) State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) that addresses Independent Living needs in our community. Learn about the work of the state council and the local CIL and find out how this community is serving individuals with housing, transportation and living independently. Held 2 to 5 p.m. at TACID, 6315 S. 19th Street in Tacoma. Call to RSVP and request accommodations for this event at (253) 582-1253. Accommodations must be made 2 weeks in advance.

Dec 3- NAMI Washington Open House

Meet the NAMI Washington staff, get information about the 2016 NAMI Walk, learn more about NAMI's work in our state, and see our office. Light refreshments will be provided. No RSVP Required. Held 5-7 p.m. at the NAMI Washington Office, 7500 Greenwood Avenue N. in Seattle.

Dec 5 – Santa’s Workshop

Santa’s Workshop is a family-focused community event connecting low-income families with gifts and resources such as Health Insurance Enrollment, Medical, Dental, Wellness Exams, Vaccines, Vision Resources, and Access Point 4 Housing. Santa’s workshop services will provide: hot meals, family games, pictures with Santa, free holiday gifts, school supplies, free haircuts, local resources, jackets, socks, and much, much more!!! Held 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Four Heroes Elementary School, 9101 Lakewood Dr., SW in Lakewood. Sponsored by Project Homeless Connect. More at www.soundoutreach.org/events, 253-593-2111 x 121 or alanna@soundoutreach.org.

Dec 10 – Behavior Supports: What Works, What Doesn’t

Pierce County Coalition for Developmental Disabilities provides this important overview for parents and teachers. Presenter is Dr. BethAnn Garteiz, PC2 Executive Director. Held PC2 at 3716 Pacific Avenue, Suite A in Tacoma. For more information or to RSVP call (253) 564-0707.

Dec 10 – It’s a Wonderful Life

FISH Food Banks for Pierce County hosts its annual showing of Frank Capra’s famous film. Doors open at 6 pm; film shows at 7pm. \$10 tickets at the Blue Mouse Theater, 2611 N. Proctor Street in Tacoma. Event includes Santa pictures, carols with the NW Repertory Singers and more.

Dec 11 – Community Inclusion Program – Celebrate Community

PAVE and Parent to Parent of Pierce County host this 2-hour celebration. Includes holiday classics movie night, craft stations, ugly sweater contest and family fun. Bring your favorite holiday treat to share. Collecting donations of coloring books and crayons for Children’s Hospital. Held 6 to 8 p.m. at Mission Woods Church, 2003 Taylor Street in Milton. Contact [Michele Lehosky](#) at (253) 565-2266.

Dec 12 – Learn About Medicare

Medicare is complex. Always has been, probably always will be. Knowing the ins and outs can be important to making the most of your Medicare benefits – especially if you are new to Medicare or soon to be enrolled. Join SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) for a 2½ hour class to learn everything you need to know about Medicare. Held at 12:30 p.m. at the University Place Library, 3609 Market Place W., University Place. Please RSVP at (253) 596-0918.

Dec 12 – Community Inclusion Program Pancake Breakfast

Free event sponsored by PAVE and Parent to Parent of Pierce County. Activities include pictures with Santa, making ornaments, cookie decorating, face painting and more. Please consider bringing a nonperishable food donation for the FISH Food Bank. Breakfast provided by the Kiwanis. Held 10 a.m. to noon at Gig Harbor High School, 5101 Rosedale Street, NW in Gig Harbor. Call for details at (253) 565-2266 or e-mail mlehosky@wapave.org.

Dec 19 – Learn About Medicare

(See Dec 12 for details.) Held at 10:00 a.m. at the South Hill Library, 15420 Meridian East, Puyallup. Please RSVP at (253) 596-0918.

Jan 12 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

Hoarding has become fodder for TV reality shows that often distort the problem as much as the solution. There are many kinds of hoarding, often hidden from view by family and friends. Hoarders are from all education backgrounds, economic situations and professions. But they all have certain key commonalities. This free workshop will help identify hoarding behaviors, provide an understanding of the disorder and a look at the solutions and resources available in Pierce County. It helps to know. Free information-only workshop. A collaborative presentation of the Pierce County Aging & Disability Resource Center, Clutter Cutters and the King-Pierce Hoarding Task Force. No RSVP required. Held 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the University Place Library, 3609 Market Place W., University Place. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 13 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

(See Jan 12 for event description) Held 12:10-12:50 p.m. at the County City Building, 7th floor Rainier Conference Room, 930 Tacoma Avenue in Tacoma. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 13 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 1 of 6)

There's no diagnosis like an Alzheimer's or Dementia diagnosis. More and more families are facing the long road of caring for a loved one with dementia. There is a lot of uncertainty before the diagnosis and in the early stages after the diagnosis. Take a look at the questions and the answers in this 6-part series for families and individuals beginning the journey. Part 1 – "What is Dementia? What are the warning signs?" Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Jan 13 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

(See Jan 12 for event description) Held 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Graham Branch Library, 9202 224th St. E., Graham. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 15 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

(See Jan 12 for event description) Held 12:10-12:50 p.m. at the Pierce County Annex main meeting room, 2401 S. 35th St, Tacoma. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 20 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

(See Jan 12 for event description) Held 6:30-7:30 p.m. at the Sumner Branch Library, 1116 Fryar Avenue in Sumner. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 23 – Hoarding: The Hidden Problem – Exposed

(See Jan 12 for event description) Held 9:30-10:30 a.m. at the Soundview Building, 3602 Pacific Avenue S., Tacoma. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Jan 27 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 2 of 6)

(See Jan 13 for series description) Part 2 – “How does the disease progress? What should I expect?” Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Feb 10 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 3 of 6)

(See Jan 13 for series description) Part 3 – “How do I start the conversation? How do I cope with the shock?” Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Feb 17 – Caring for Your Teeth After 50

After age 50, even if you brush and floss regularly, you may face certain issues when it comes to your oral health. Dental problems can be caused by medications, dentures, diet or other issues. And oral health is now linked to other chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and dementia. So what can you do? Held 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Sound View Building, Suite 200, 3602 Pacific Avenue in Tacoma Free; No RSVP required. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Feb 18 – Caring for Your Teeth After 50

(See Feb 17 for event description) Held 12:10 to 12:50 p.m. at the County City Building, Rainier Conference Room 7th Floor, 930 S. Tacoma Avenue in Tacoma. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Feb 19 – Caring for Your Teeth After 50

(See Feb 17 for event description) Held 12:10 to 12:50 p.m. at the Pierce County Annex Main Meeting Room, 2401 S. 35th Street in Tacoma. (In case of inclement weather call (253) 798-8787 for possible postponement.)

Feb 24 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 4 of 6)

(See Jan 13 for series description) Part 4 – “What are the typical behaviors? How do I manage them?” Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Feb 25 – Senior Lobby Day

Save the date. Annual opportunity to raise the level of awareness about senior issues in Olympia.

Mar 9 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 5 of 6)

(See Jan 13 for series description) Part 5 – “How do I pay for care? What are the legal things I should do?” Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Mar 23 – Oh My Gosh – Now What? (Part 6 of 6)

(See Jan 13 for series description) Part 6 – “Where can I turn for help? What are the resources I can rely on?” Held 1 to 2 p.m. at the Jim & Carolyn Milgard Family HOPE Center, 8502 Skansie Avenue in Gig Harbor. Free; No RSVP required.

Mar 29 – Washington Statewide Transition Conference

Save the date. Held at the Edward Hansen Conference Center at Xfinity Arena in Everett, WA. Registration will open in January, 2016.

April 15 – Discovery 2016

Save the date. Alzheimer’s Association annual regional conference. Held at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle. Registration opens Jan 5, 2016.

Q&A of the Month

Question: The weather is turning pretty bad but I still want to do some exercise. What do you suggest?

Answer: Braving the elements can be tough for many folks of all ages. It can be wet, cold, windy and icy and drivers have a hard time seeing pedestrians. Mall walking has become a popular activity. The Tacoma Mall and the South Hill Malls are great. They offer warm and dry environments, are well-lit and safe and offer even surfaces for walkers. And there are places to sit for a bit if you get tired. As you return day after day you will start to see familiar faces and people will start to recognize you. That’s the first step to meeting new friends. And afterward you can stop for a coffee if you like. The Centers for Disease Control has published a new publication – [Mall Walking: A Program Resource Guide](#). While it is for folks who might organize a program it’s a good starter for individuals as well. You are going to be surprised at how many folks are doing early morning mall walking these days. And remember, the better your walking shoes are the more you will get to like mall walking.

NATIONALLY

See Medicare Costs for 2016

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the final cost structure for Medicare Parts A & B. The National Council on Aging has produced a handy cost-sharing chart and fact sheet to explain the increases, including which beneficiaries will pay the Part B premium of \$121.80. [Read the fact sheet](#) | [See the chart](#) (Source: NCOA)

Understanding Health Insurance

The Kaiser Family Foundation has written and produced new YouToons to help consumers better understand health insurance. These short videos explain important health insurance concepts, such as health premiums, out-of-pocket health costs, and provider networks. [Learn more and watch the videos](#). (Source: KFF)

Fewer Medicare-Subsidized Drug Plans Means Less Choice for Low-Income Seniors

2 million older or disabled Americans will have to find new coverage that accepts the subsidy as full premium payment or else pay for the shortfall. As beneficiaries explore options during the Medicare enrollment period, there are only 227 such plans nationwide from which they can choose next year, 20 percent fewer than this year, and the lowest number since the drug benefit was added to Medicare in 2006, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. [Read more](#). (Source: KHN)

Advocates Question Medicare’s Wheelchair Criteria

On Jan. 1, 2016 it will become much more difficult, and in some cases impossible, to get Medicare to pay for seating and positioning equipment including wheelchair cushions, wheelchair backs, controllers and other items deemed “accessories” that wheelchair users need. This is because of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Final Rule 1614-F, which is scheduled to take effect in January 2016. It will reduce how much they will pay for complex rehab technology (CRT). Anything beyond a standard (hospital or “drugstore style”) wheelchair is considered CRT. Advocates say these

cuts will make it much more difficult, and in many cases impossible, to get funding for the proper seating and positioning equipment that users of complex manual and/or complex power wheelchairs need to stay healthy. To make matters worse, private insurance companies and Medicaid programs generally follow Medicare payment guidelines. [Read more](#). (Source: New Mobility)

U.S. Treasury's New Retirement Savings Option

The U.S. Treasury Department has introduced *myRA*, a retirement savings account for individuals looking for a simple, safe, and affordable way to save for their retirement. Over thirty percent of all American households have no retirement savings. Designed for people who don't have access to a retirement savings plan through their job, *myRA* offers a favorable alternative. Employers do not manage employee *myRA* accounts, contribute to them, or match employee contributions. Employers simply facilitate an ongoing payroll deduction from the employee's paycheck to the designated *myRA* account in the amount the employee chooses. Learn more about *myRA* at www.myRA.treasury.gov. (Source: SSA)

Creation of a Medicaid Task Force

The House Energy and Commerce Committee has created a Medicaid Task Force to evaluate and strengthen the crucial program. Health Subcommittee Vice Chairman, Brett Guthrie, will chair the task force, which is composed of only Republican Representatives. Committee Chairman, Fred Upton, appointed Representative Marsha Blackburn, Representative Susan Brooks, Representative Larry Bucshon, Representative Michael C. Burgess, Representative Chris Collins, Representative Bill Flores, and Representative Markwayne Mullin to serve on the task force. [Click here](#) for more. (Source: NASUAD)

How High Is America's Health Care Cost Burden?

One-quarter of privately insured working-age adults have high health care cost burdens relative to their incomes in 2015, according to the [Commonwealth Fund Health Care Affordability Index](#), a comprehensive measure of consumer health care costs. When looking specifically at adults with low incomes, more than half have high cost burdens. In addition, when privately insured adults were asked how they rated their affordability, greater shares reported their premiums and deductible costs were difficult or impossible to afford than the Index would suggest. Health plan deductibles and copayments had negative effects on many people's willingness to get needed health care or fill prescriptions. In addition, many consumers are confused about which services are free to them and which count toward their deductible. (Source: Commonwealth Fund)

Seniors Tend To Quit Medicare Advantage When Health Declines

[Senior citizens are switching](#) from privately run insurance plans to traditional Medicare when they face serious, long-term health conditions, a study shows. Researchers at Brown University found that 17 percent of Medicare Advantage patients who entered nursing homes for long-term care chose to switch to traditional Medicare the following year. Only 3 percent of similar patients in Medicare made the decision to go to a private Medicare Advantage plan. The story is the same for patients who required short-term nursing care or home health care. A larger number switched out of Medicare Advantage plans than chose to move into them from traditional Medicare. (Source: NPR)

Rx for America: Nearly 6 in 10 adults take prescription drugs, study says

Fully 59% of U.S. adults were on at least one prescription drug in the years 2011 and 2012, and 15% took five or more. A dozen years earlier, 51% of adults filled at least one prescription and 8% filled at least five, federal survey data show. The most popular medications were those designed to treat high blood pressure – 27% of adults took them in 2011 and 2012, up from 20% in 1999 and 2000. Coming

