

AgeWise with Bob Horrocks



Whether you have an older family member, an older friend or neighbor or an older co-worker or employee, the aging of our population is and will have an impact on all of us. This column is intended to provide a potpourri of interesting, up-to-date information that you will find useful and relevant to your busy life. This regular column will focus on events, products, legislation, services, people and opportunities relevant to our local older population and their families.

A word about flu shots

Grocery and drug store chains are rushing to provide flu shots earlier than usual this year, in part due to an expected high demand resulting from publicity about the H1N1 virus, sometimes referred to as swine flu. Be aware that the flu shots that are available now are for seasonal influenza, NOT for H1N1. All children 6 months through age 18 and all adults 50 and older, and anyone who wants to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza or spreading influenza to others, are encouraged to get the regular influenza shot each year, and this year is no different.

High risk groups for H1N1 include pregnant women and younger people, particularly those ages 6 months to 24 years. H1N1 vaccine is expected to become available later this fall to high risk groups first and then later to the general public.

Locally, the Delaware General Health District will be providing the seasonal influenza shot and the pneumonia shot at sites throughout the county. The health district encourages residents age 50 and older to get flu shots at the Center for Older Adults on Oct. 14 or 20. For more details about the flu and health clinic schedules, call the health department at 740-203-2040 or visit delawarehealth.org.

Arthur Flemming honored

The newest housing facility for older adults in the City of Delaware is now open and accepting applications. Arthur Place is located on South Houk Road at Cobblestone. The facility is named in honor of Arthur Sherwood Flemming, former president of Ohio Wesleyan University. Flemming worked under four U.S. presidents and helped shape the Social Security system for four decades. He was also chairman of the White House Conference on Aging in 1971 and was appointed the first U.S. Commissioner on Aging. The dedication of Arthur Place will take place at 11 a.m. Thursday at the new facility.

Alcohol and aging research

According to Duke University researchers, 22 percent of men and 9 percent of women ages 50-64 had engaged in binge drinking (five or more drinks at one time) within the month of the survey. For those age 65 and above, 14 percent of men and 3 percent of women reported binge drinking. The report notes

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More older Americans find themselves in poverty

By HOPE YEN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The poverty rate among older Americans could be nearly twice as high as the traditional 10 percent level, according to a revision of a half-century-old formula for calculating medical costs and geographic variations in the cost of living.

The National Academy of Science's formula, which is gaining credibility with public officials including some in the Obama administration, would put the poverty rate for Americans 65 and over at 18.6 percent, or 6.8 million people, compared with 9.7 percent, or 3.6 million people, under the existing measure. The original government formula, created in 1955, doesn't take account of rising costs of medical care and other factors.

"It's a hidden problem," said Robin Talbert, president of the AARP

Foundation, which provides job training and support to low-income seniors and is backing legislation that would adopt the NAS formula. "There are still many millions of older people on the edge, who don't have what they need to get by."

If the academy's formula is adopted, a more refined picture of American poverty could emerge that would capture everyday costs of necessities besides just food. The result could upend long-standing notions of those in greatest need and lead eventually to shifts in how billions of federal dollars for the poor are distributed for health, housing, nutrition and child-care benefits.

The overall official poverty rate would increase, from 12.5 percent to 15.3 percent, for a total of 45.7 million people, according to rough calculations by the Census Bureau. Data on all segments, not only the elderly, would be affected:

— The rate for children under 18 in

poverty would decline slightly, to 17.9 percent.

— Single mothers and their children, who disproportionately receive food stamps, would see declines in the rates of poverty because noncash aid would be taken into account. Low-income people who are working could see increases in poverty rates, a reflection of transportation and child-care costs.

— Cities with higher costs of living, such as New York, Chicago and San Francisco, would see higher poverty rates, while more rural areas in the Midwest and South might see declines.

— The rate for extreme poverty, defined as income falling below 50 percent of the poverty line, would decrease due to housing and other noncash benefits.

— Immigrant poverty rates would go

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Multi-generational homes on the rise

By BRYAN BULLOCK
Staff Writer

Sunbury residents Gary and Ruth Ann Shuster found themselves facing a difficult question, one not uncommon for baby boomers, but new to them. An aging family member had reached the point where they could no longer live alone and now the Shusters had to decide what to do.

"I couldn't see putting her in a nursing home, there was nothing wrong with her. She just needed someone to watch over her," said Ruth Ann Shuster, referring to her then 91-year-old grandmother.

So the Shusters, both 40, welcomed grandmother Lula Fletcher into their home and in doing so joined four generations of family under one roof.

Multi-generational homes are on the rise nationwide. In 2000,

there were 2.3 million older parents living with their adult children, according to the U.S. Census Bureau; in 2007, that number climbed to 3.6 million, a roughly 60 percent increase.

Don Rankey, CEO of Delaware City-based HomeLife Companies, Inc., attributes the trend to two major factors: better health care means people are living longer and a shaky economy means they, or their families, may not be able to afford other more costly living arrangements.

"A lot of times parents are moving back in with their children because they can't afford an assisted living facility," said Rankey, whose company develops and operates retirement communities around the country.

The average assisted living facility costs around \$3,000 a month, he said, and unlike nursing homes, there is no reimbursement for the service under

Medicaid or Medicare.

"You can get long-term care in a nursing home, it's just nobody wants to be in a nursing home unless they have to," Rankey said.

Whether by choice or circumstance, households that sandwich several generations of family together will likely feel rewarded and challenged.

"I think space is probably the biggest issue, that and money. Who is paying for what, how do we separate food and issues like that," said Marilyn Parker, a spokeswoman with Home Instead Senior Care, a national in-home care agency with offices in Delaware and Columbus.

Home Instead has launched a public education campaign, called Too Close for Comfort — a program which offers advice and a number of tools to help families cope with the obstacles asso-

ciated with multi-generational households. The campaign includes a handbook and a Web site, makewayformom.com, with research-driven insight to help families make informed decisions about their living arrangements.

Parents and children living together after years of separation can each experience stress, but often for different reasons; seniors may worry about losing independence, family caretakers may fret whether they have the resources to house them. There are an array of emotional, financial and safety issues involved.

"Some days were much harder than other days just for the fact your grandmother is going to tell you what to do whether you like it or not," Ruth Ann Shuster joked, reflecting on their time living together.

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