

# The Senior Advocate Alert



Interstate Corporate Center • 6350 Center Drive, Bldg 5, Suite 101 • Norfolk, VA 23502 • (757) 461-9481 • [www.ssseva.org](http://www.ssseva.org)

February 26, 2010

2010 GA Session Vol. 2, No. 3

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Senior Advocate Alert** is published periodically during the General Assembly session and is distributed via e-mail. Printed copies are available at meetings of local Aging Task Forces and Aging Commissions. If you wish to be placed on the e-mail list, or if you wish to be removed from the list, please contact [mhowell@ssseva.org](mailto:mhowell@ssseva.org).

\*\*\*\*\*

## ~ LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM SENIOR SERVICES ~

At the start of the 2010 General Assembly, Area Agencies on Aging across the commonwealth were seeking legislation that promotes Care Coordination for Elderly Virginians in ways that better meet the needs of clients. Now our care coordination programs face massive setbacks via Senate budget amendment 275 3s, which would reduce funding by \$337,250 in fiscal 2010-11 and again in fiscal 2011-12.

### [275 3s Reduce Funding for Care Coordination Services](#)

[Explanation: This amendment reduces \\$337,250 from the general fund each year for care coordination services provided to the elderly.](#)

For Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia, that would translate into care coordination cuts of \$26,854 each year and the probable layoff of a social worker. As bad as such a layoff would be on the individual employee and his or her family, the impact of such a loss would have long-lasting ripple effects through our care coordination program, and the clients being served and their families.

Care coordinators are really the heart of our long-term care program. We have eight care coordinators across South Hampton Roads, and each one of them touches 120 to 230 seniors and their families each year. Our care coordinators help seniors and their families negotiate their way through a complicated system and assist them in designing individualized plans to meet their needs without having to move to a nursing home.

Care coordinators help in so many ways, that perhaps the best way to explain their value is through a couple of examples. **You can find such real stories on Page 3 of this Alert.**

The loss of one care coordinator, in itself, may not seem so bad in a budget year in which so many other massive cuts are being proposed to human service programs. Yet, each

loss on top of loss thins out our resources that much further, hurting people who already are struggling, people who often do not have the wherewithal to turn elsewhere.

What can we do? Because 275 3s now goes to the House of Delegates, I recommend that each of you contact at least two state legislators – your own delegate and either Del. S. Chris Jones of Suffolk or Del. Johnny S. Joannou of Portsmouth. Both serve on the House Appropriations Committee.

***Del. Jones can be contacted at:***

General Assembly Building, Room 720  
Capitol Square  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: (804) 698-1076  
e-mail [DelCJones@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelCJones@house.virginia.gov)

***Del. Joannou can be contacted at:***

General Assembly Building, Room 423  
Capitol Square  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: (804) 698-1079  
Fax: (804) 698-6779

Here is list of all state legislators from South Hampton Roads. To contact your representative, please go online to <http://leg1.state.va.us/101/mbr/MBR.HTM> and click on the name of your legislator.

***Senators***

Harry B. Blevins, L. Louise Lucas, Jeffrey L. McWaters, Yvonne B. Miller, Ralph S. Northam, Frederick M. Quayle, Frank W. Wagner

***Delegates***

Kenneth C. Alexander, William K. Barlow, John A. Cosgrove, Algie T. Howell Jr., Salvatore R. Iaquinto, Matthew James, Johnny S. Joannou, S. Chris Jones, Barry D. Knight, Paula J. Miller, Harry R. Purkey, Lionell Spruill Sr., Chris P. Stolle, Robert Tata, Roslyn C. Tyler, Ron A. Villanueva

It's a tough year for our legislators. They are under unprecedented demands to balance a budget with a \$4 billion funding gap. The Advocacy Committee of Senior Services has visited each member of the South Hampton Roads delegation and none of them favor cutting services to citizens in need. Please communicate with them in terms of respect, but please also be firm in letting them know that cutting valuable programs like care coordination hurts real people in our communities.

John N. Skirven  
CEO of Senior Services

*Here are two stories that illustrate the important work of care coordinators in South Hampton Roads:*

**SUFFOLK** – Jane Alexander (not client’s real name) is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Her daughter, Harriet, called Senior Services’ Western Tidewater Long-Term Care Supervisor Susan Story requesting assistance through the Senior Companion program. Companions provide help with light meal preparation and housekeeping, grocery shopping and other daily activities. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of their work is being a “friendly visitor.” As Senior Companion Mary Goodman says, “I enjoy helping the people I regard as my friends. I give them love, respect and care.”

During their first group meeting, Harriet and Susan met privately while Mrs. Alexander and the companion visited. Harriet expressed her gratitude by saying “I don’t know how to thank you, I could cry.” Now Harriet is able to leave her mother several times a week, knowing she is safe and enjoying her visits with the companion. Family members often suffer from high levels of stress caring for their loved ones. Respite is just one of the critical services Senior Services provides that enable the elderly to continue living at home and prevents unnecessary nursing home placement.

**PORTSMOUTH** – Rose and Lewis Fly have lived in the same modest Portsmouth home for the last 46 of their 52 years of marriage. After 35 years in the Navy yard, Lewis decided it was time to retire, and the couple began to enjoy the advantages that came with retirement including traveling, visiting family and friends and spoiling their grandchildren.

Rose says that in 2000, Lewis began showing signs of dementia. Rose struggled for four years to care for her husband on her own until a niece referred her to Senior Services. Rose then made a connection with Senior Services’ Family Caregiver Specialist Ann Gause.

People have suggested to Rose on more than one occasion that she put Lewis in a facility, but she is adamantly opposed to that idea. “Not under my watch. Not as long as I’m alive. He knows his home, he knows my voice, this is where he is comfortable,” she says.

Rose says she has been abundantly blessed to be able to care for Lewis and keep him in the familiar surroundings of his own home. And, she is immensely grateful for the compassionate, caring people at Senior Services who selflessly make it their life’s work to help her and people like her.

Says Rose: “Finding somebody who understands what’s going on with Lewis and how to take care of him has been a tremendous help.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### **COMMUNICATIONS TIP**

AARP advises you should **HAND WRITE** your comments to the legislators and send them return receipt requested or hand-deliver them to the legislators.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

## ~ 2010 Virginia General Assembly ~

### KEY DATES:

- Thursday, March 11: Budget bills conference report available by noon.
- Saturday, March 13: End of 2010 session.

### KEY WEB SITES: *Contact legislators and track legislation.*

- <http://www.ssseva.org/advocacy/representatives.shtml>
- [http://www.vaaaa.org/legislative\\_updates/](http://www.vaaaa.org/legislative_updates/)

\*\*\*\*\*

## ~ FEDERAL LEGISLATION ~

### KEY DATES:

- **Older Americans Act reauthorization:** the federal Administration on Aging has begun soliciting public input concerning congressional reauthorization in 2011.

Since 1965, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has gained recognition as a unique and highly regarded statute that has stimulated the development of a comprehensive and coordinated service system. This system has contributed greatly to enhancing the lives of older individuals, family caregivers, and persons with disabilities.

There are ways for citizens and organizations to comment about the reauthorization:

**Direct Input via the AoA Web site** by clicking [here](#).

Attend an OAA Reauthorization Comment Session. There will be one from 1 to 2 p.m. Wednesday, April 28, sponsored by Virginia's Commonwealth Council on Aging, at the Virginia Department for the Aging, 1610 Forest Avenue, Suite 100, in Richmond. For more information about this event, contact Bill Peterson at [\(804\) 662-9325](tel:8046629325) or [Bill.Peterson@vda.virginia](mailto:Bill.Peterson@vda.virginia).

For more details, please e-mail John Skirven at [jskirven@ssseva.org](mailto:jskirven@ssseva.org).

###