

Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteer Newsletter



Promoting Smart Aging To Ensure Healthy Futures

The *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteer* program is one component of the *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures* project ongoing in Copiah, Lincoln, Oktibbeha, and Clay counties in Mississippi. This volunteer program is an effort to engage interested residents of the four involved counties in a training program to become volunteer lay health educators and deliver programs of particular importance to seniors in their communities. The curriculum includes health message training on osteoporosis, self-care, Alzheimer's disease, breast cancer, prostate cancer, colorectal cancer, oral health, heart attack and stroke warning signs, and vision care as well as additional training on making powerful presentations, setting reachable goals, and building community partnerships. Twenty-five volunteers participated in the two-day trainings and are now equipped to deliver these important health messages within their circles of influence. Volunteers were trained in the four counties by late April and have been busy



Elizabeth Gwin, Senior Citizen in Oktibbeha County and Ann Sansing, *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteer Coordinator*, visit about the volunteer program and opportunities for senior adults to get involved in their community.

scheduling locations for sharing with friends, relatives, and caregivers of the senior population. Each volunteer has agreed to give back twenty hours of community service over a one year time period in exchange for the training. Ann Sansing is responsible for coordinating and developing the training program and serves as the *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteer*

Coordinator with Bonnie Carew serving as the project director. Copiah-Lincoln Community College is the sub-contractor for the *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures* project and has provided facility and program support.

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Healthy Futures Volunteers in Copleah-Lincoln Counties

Copleah-Lincoln Community College was the local setting for the *Healthy Futures Volunteer* training sessions. Sixteen participants completed the training program. The volunteers range from retired senior citizens with varied backgrounds of experience to young adults that have professional careers involving the senior adult population. The volunteers are provided training materials along with CD's containing the health messages ready to deliver to an audience of one or more.



Another delivery style is a hands-on resource manual for the attendees to use as a visual aid while the speaker presents the health message. To date, one couple, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Holland have been busy sharing their knowledge about good "Self-Care". They have delivered this presentation to 60 individuals in the Georgia Pacific Retiree Club, 35 senior citizens at First Methodist Church, 20 individuals at the Senior Adult Computer Class at Copleah-Lincoln

Community College and to 5 individuals in the Mathematics Club. A resource book, [Healthwise for Life: A Self-Care Guide for People Age 50 and Better](#) is offered to each person that at-

tends the presentation on Self-Care. This book has received rave reviews by the attendees. One attendee

referred to it as the most concise, well-written book ever seen. Mrs. Shari Gaddy has shared the "Self-Care" presentation with 29 attendees at the newly opened Senior Citizen Center in Crystal Springs. Ms. Judy Fitchjarrell has several scheduled presentations on the calendar at the Senior Citizen Center and at a local church. Other volunteers are in the process of scheduling presentations for senior groups or for one-on-one presentations. The volunteers include: *Cynthany Anderson, Venis Dillon, Opal Exell, Judy Fitchjarrell, Shari Gaddy, Zach Gaddy, Betty Jo Henagan, Lillie Henderson, Kim Hodges, June Holland, Robert Holland, Rob McBeth, Brenda Michael, Callie Patterson, Latasha Smith and Rhonda Walker.* Evelyn Peavy serves as on-site *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures* Program Coordinator for Copleah and Lincoln counties.

"The Healthwise for Life book is the most concise, well-written book I have ever seen."

—Attendee
(at presentation on "Self-Care")

Volunteering in Clay County

Clay county now has three certified volunteers. Two volunteers are retired senior citizens and the other is a young adult with career responsibilities involving senior adults at the local hospital. The summer has been a busy time for these volunteers, but schedules and contacts are being made to deliver the health messages to local church groups, at the hospital educational programs involving

senior citizens, and to one-on-one settings in a local senior resident living establishment. The volunteers in Clay county include: *Anne Comer, Janelle Craig, and Dorothy Landon.* Clay County Extension Service was the training site for the volunteer program. The Extension staff was

instrumental in assisting with promotion and logistics.



Oktibbeha County Volunteers

A dedicated group of six volunteers completed the training program in Oktibbeha county. The training was held at First United Methodist Church during the month of April. The volunteers include *Georgia Murphy, Lynn Phillips Gains, Annie Kyles, Dorothy Armstead, Mildred Ebersole, Minnie Fox, and Thelma Gentry*. Ms. Dorothy Armstead has been busy sharing one-on-one presentations about the “Warning Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attacks and Strokes” with several of her family and friends. Minnie Fox delivered the “Prostate Can-

cer” health message to 15 attendees in late May. Ms. Georgia Murphy has shared the Alzheimer’s health message with a relative in much need of this information. Ms. Annie Kyles has scheduled sessions with her local church group. Other volunteers are in the process of planning their schedules to share the health messages as time permits. This group of women is comprised of retired individuals and those still in the workforce. Their expertise is

represented in the field of education, healthcare profession, financial planning, social work and dietetics.



Benefits of Volunteering

Can you remember the last time you volunteered? Didn’t it make you feel good? Research has shown a strong correlation between health and volunteering. According to a report “The Health Benefits of Volunteering”, which compiled scientific reviews from numerous studies, volunteering can offer a personal sense of accomplishment which leads to increased self-esteem and a greater

sense of self-worth and trust. Some studies found that when individuals volunteer, they are more likely to live longer, even when controlling for factors such as age, health, and gender. Other studies reviewed individual state’s volunteer rates and found that states with higher volunteer rates are more likely to have lower mortality rates and less incidence of heart disease. In summary, volunteering can

offer opportunities for civic involvement to help improve communities, thus allowing for higher functional physical ability, mental stimulation, and overall life satisfaction. So...GET INVOLVED, you have something to offer others...your time!

Kudos to Organizations and Volunteers

Numerous organizations provided assistance with the subject matter training included in the *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteer* program. Mississippi State University Extension Service Area Health Agents were instrumental as well as representatives from the

American Cancer Society, Mississippi Chapter of Alzheimer’s Association, American Heart and American Stroke Association, and the Mississippi Department of Health/Oral Health Division. Impacts from the training are as follows: Twenty five trained volunteers are

more knowledgeable of health related matters plus 175 individuals have heard a “health message” as a result of the volunteer program since the training concluded at the end of April.



Twenty five trained volunteers are more knowledgeable of health related matters plus 175 individuals have heard a health message as a result of the volunteer program.

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Dear Readers:

If you would like for one of the Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteers to share with a group of senior adults, caregivers, or at one-on-one settings, please contact me and arrangements can be made. Take advantage of an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge that may greatly impact your life or the life of someone you know.

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Topics that could be requested:

Osteoporosis	Breast Cancer	Oral Health
Self-Care	Prostate Cancer	Vision Care
Alzheimer's Disease	Colorectal Cancer	Heart Attack and Stroke



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Laughter is Like Good Medicine

Laughter may not be the best medicine, but it can be good medicine according to research. Studies have shown that laughing can lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones, increase muscle flexion, and strengthen the immune system as well as serve as a good cardiac exercise. Dr.

Linda Mitchell, Mississippi State University Extension Service 4-H Youth Development Specialist has done extensive research about laughter and therapeutic humor and the positive effects it has on people. She shared with the Oktibbeha County *Smart Aging: Healthy Futures Volunteers* personal stories, jokes, and events others have shared with her to



the session with more knowledge of the history and benefits of therapeutic laughter and more committed to incorporating it into their daily routine.

illustrate how humor can help you relax, laugh at yourself, and stimulate a healthy positive attitude. The volunteers experienced interactive ways to incorporate laughter into group settings by playing simple games, even wearing funny faces to provoke laughter. Beginning each day with a smile was emphasized as one of the most important things to do for overall health. The vol-

