



State Society on Aging of New York

SSA BULLETIN

WINTER 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In 2008, it will be my privilege to serve as President of The State Society on Aging of New York (SSANY). This year we celebrate 36 years of working toward our mission "...bringing together individuals and groups from health, government, educational and community settings committed to improving the quality of life for older New Yorkers through education, research, service, and advocacy." Our organization has been in the forefront of these endeavors for all of this time and I look forward to helping us maintain our proud record.

I joined the State Society on Aging of New York nearly ten years ago as a wet-behind-the-ears graduate student. The members of SSANY welcomed me and over the years have provided mentorship, friendships, collegial relationships, as well as opportunities and forums to address policy issues and conduct collaborative research projects. I am pleased to be able to give something back to the organization that has brought me so much personal and professional fulfillment. As a researcher and applied developmental psychologist, I understand the vital importance of interdisciplinary research and practice to ensure the best outcomes for policy, education, and services for older adults and those who serve them. As a person in our society, I understand the value of caring for its members, for those who

have contributed so much and still have so much to give

Few organizations provide opportunities and forums for addressing policy, research, education, and practice issues. I invite our members to participate in our committees, list serve, and annual conference. You will get as much as you give. To learn about activities, opportunities, and our annual conference and to see how and where participation can benefit you, visit our website: www.ssany.org.

Mark your calendars for October 23-25th 2008 for the Annual Conference at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York. The theme proposed for this year is: **Geriatric Mental Health: Practice, Research, Education, and Policy**. Again, I look forward to a productive and fulfilling year for us all.



Deborah Heiser, PhD
2008 President

Why Aging Services Must be Modernized

By
Edwin Méndez-Santiago

Over the past several decades our old notions about aging have so dramatically altered that it is fair to say aging has been “re-imagined.” Aging services, in contrast, have lagged behind this transformation. To serve today’s elders, aging services also must be “re-imagined,” or, to use the term applied by the Administration on Aging to the reauthorized Older American Act, “modernized.”

I believe a modernized system must devote significant resources to helping communities develop the opportunities, interventions and supports needed by their residents for healthy aging. In other words, we need to develop community-specific programs that support healthy aging-in-place and supplement the current menu of available aging services designed mainly to address vulnerabilities and deficits. We also need new service delivery models based on collaborative, cross-system and cross-disciplinary approaches. The days of working in a “silo” are gone.

Furthermore, there must be a radical transformation in the relationship between provider and client. Paternalistic models must yield to models that allow consumers choice and control over the services they receive and how and where they are delivered. Services, too, must be client-centered. In my view, case management service, modernized to be client-centered and holistic, would be the key service in a

long term care continuum, linking consumers to resources across service systems and monitoring the “fit” of their care plans over time. Modernized senior centers would be gateways where older persons could access health and benefits information, educational courses, jobs and volunteer work, health promotion programs and opportunities for cultural and creative exploration.

Our current system is based on the outmoded assumption that all elders need the same services delivered in the same way. Consequently, it focuses on processes and procedures, and unit-of-service measures. Modernization is necessary to transform this system to one that is consistent with “re-imagined aging.” The new values of flexibility, adaptability, outcomes and results must replace the old prescriptions.

How do we achieve this modernization and move beyond services “re-imagining” to actual practice? A window of opportunity has opened, following enactment of the new Older Americans Act with its call for more community-based long-term care options, consumer choice, and a greater role for the aging services network in promoting healthy aging.

Partnerships are needed to: (1) articulate the objectives of a transformed system; (2) develop consumer-choice models; (3) assess the needs and interests of specific older populations - ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic, cultural – and develop and test targeted programs; (4) translate aging research into evidence-based low-cost programs to advance healthy aging that can be implemented through the aging network; (5) develop outcome and other accountability measures appropriate to our new objectives; (6) revise workforce

training content and expand fieldwork opportunities consistent with the new services framework. SSANY can play a major role in bringing interested members together to form these cross-disciplinary partnerships.

The New York City Department for the Aging has begun modernizing its aging services through a consultative process with community partners and stakeholders across disciplines. We are now issuing requests for proposals to provide the re-imagined services. I know that other communities across the State and nation are embarked on similar initiatives. The ability of the aging network not only to survive, but to play a critical role in shaping America's response to its new demographic realities, rides on our successful modernization.



Edwin Méndez-Santiago
*Commissioner New York City
Department for the Aging*

Why I'm teaching people how to lobby for the environment

By
Stephanie Low

Because I consider global warming - scorching is a better word - the most

serious threat to our children's and grandchildren's continued existence on this planet, I spend every waking moment not required for my daily concerns working to defeat it. And because I see our country's present energy policies as our greatest obstacle to overcoming this enormous challenge, I asked myself how I, as a lone citizen, could act most effectively to reverse those policies. The answer that appeared on my inner google was - lobby our reps for specific environmental bills that will have the greatest impact.

My background as a lobbyist goes back only a few years, when once again I was looking for a trigger point, this time to eliminate electronic voting machines and make NYC, NYS and federal elections as transparent as we could get them. Working with New Yorkers for Verified Voting (nyvv.org), I lobbied as many NYC Election Commissioners and NYS party leaders as would see me, and in April 2006 went to D.C. to lobby congressional offices with a group called Vote Trust USA. We were promoting N.J. Congressman Rush Holt's bill to mandate a paper trail for all national elections and in one long weekend we brought the number of co-sponsors for the bill from 165 to 189. At that point, I thought it was do-able to reach the goal of 216 before the August break, which would have dramatically improved the bill's chances of getting to the House floor for a vote.

I spent three weeks calling legislative offices to get appointments with staffers, calling eight hours a day five days a week. In three weeks I had 65+ appointments set up, then attended each appointment and laid out to Democrat and Republican staffers alike the odd notion that without a paper trail

their bosses were in danger of losing their jobs through machine malfunction and/or malicious hacking. I had credible documentation to back up my case. By early August, we had 222 co-sponsors of the bill.

After Katrina, the IPCC report, the Stern Report, hurricane Wilma's destruction of the Florida apartment I inherited from my parents, the clearly frightened scientists' reports of much faster-than-expected thaw of the polar ice cap glaciers worldwide, I felt I had to turn my attention back to global warming no matter what. And what I could now offer was some fairly successful lobbying experience. I decided to teach other ordinary citizens just as worried as I was (am) how to lobby for the bills that are necessary to slowly (but as fast as possible) turn this country's environmental policies around.

I developed a 2-3 hour workshop on lobbying for the environment and presented it at the SSANY's Conference on Aging in Albany last October. I didn't mobilize any volunteers, but I felt those at the workshop got my points, and would probably be able to use my model for their own purposes. Since then, seven other organizations have invited me to present this workshop for their group. Starting in January, that's what I'll be doing, including active lobbying for a bill that has good prospects in the NYS Senate. I hope to do that with a bunch of volunteer lobbyists who can amplify my one voice to a roar.

The core of the workshop is the bill. It's called "The NYS Lighting Efficiency and Toxics Reduction Act." Anyone who takes the workshop must commit to working for this bill. It was recommended to me as an important and very passable bill by an excellent

organization called Environmental Advocates (eany.org). I consider the bill important because it requires the Dept. of Environmental Conservation to limit electric energy consumption for lighting. That would be huge, promoting the use of CFL bulbs throughout the state. Aside from the bill's use as a teaching tool at the center of my presentation, its passage would have intrinsic value for cleaner and lower energy use in NYS.

Al Gore's recent acceptance speech to the Nobel Committee that honored him is long, heart-wrenching in its description of what we've already lost, and eloquent in describing what we could still achieve. Near the end, he says

...most of all, my own country...will need to make the boldest moves, or stand accountable before history for its failure to act.

If we don't, there will be no consolation, except the unthinkable terrible one that any future "history" will be short. The good news is that **IF** we willing--*right now*--to devote the time and attention to make the necessary and very major changes in our lives and our government's policies, we can hope to offer our grandchildren the joy of creating children able to live out their lives on a planet healthy enough to nourish them



Stephanie Low with granddaughter
Pippa

If you want to book Stephanie Low's workshop on how to lobby for the environment, contact her at stephlow@mindspring.com. There is no charge except the requirement to commit to lobby for an environmental bill.

MOLST DVD and Web site Collaborative Aim to Improve End-of-Life Care

By
Dr. Patricia Bomba

The Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) Program is designed to improve the quality of care that seriously ill patients with advanced chronic illness receive at the end of life. An instructional MOLST DVD produced this year focuses on the importance of antecedent goal-based, patient-centered conversation among patients, families and providers.

The MOLST DVD includes 2 videos and 3 refresher videos:

- "Writing Your Final Chapter: Know Your Choices...Share Your Wishes" is designed to inform patients, families and professionals about MOLST.
- "Honoring Patient Preferences: The Role of Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) in New York State", an educational video for professionals, provides the core curriculum on MOLST.

Health care professionals can earn a maximum of 2.0 educational credit hours free of charge by viewing both videos and completing the MOLST DVD post test. Please visit the MOLST Training Video page at www.compassionandsupport.org and follow the simple steps.

"You are urged to discuss the importance of completing the MOLST form with your seriously ill patients," says Patricia Bomba, M.D., Excellus BCBS Medical Director, Geriatrics and this year's recipient of SSANY President's Award. "By addressing

these issues before a potentially catastrophic health event, your patients' loved ones will have clear instruction about the kind of care the patient desires in the event of a life-threatening illness. Please share the MOLST DVD with seriously ill patients and their families."

The MOLST DVD is a statewide initiative made possible with funding from the Medical Society of the State of New York and Excellus BCBS in collaboration with the state Department of Health, as well as the Monroe and Onondaga Counties MOLST Community Implementation team. It is being distributed free of charge to physicians, hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, Emergency Medical Services organizations and other health-care agencies. If you would like copies of the MOLST form, view the training videos or obtain a MOLST DVD, please contact us at www.compassionandsupport.org.

To support expansion of the MOLST Program and to better serve the community and professionals across New York State and beyond, the community website www.compassionandsupport.org has undergone extensive redesign. With a separate section for professionals and one for patients and families, this web site is dedicated to educating and empowering patients, families and professionals on advance care planning, MOLST, palliative care, pain management and hospice care and related topics.

MOLST is spreading throughout New York State. There have been no major outward consequences and no major negative issues with MOLST. The positive attributes outweigh any potential risks. MOLST is well recognized. Trained professionals know how to read it and understand its intent.

Given the positive outcomes of the community pilot, we anticipate expansion of the MOLST Program in the community statewide and rapid expansion of MOLST utilization in health care facilities across the state.

As health care professionals, you have the ability to help get the MOLST program and

the community web site into wider use in our community so that patients can be empowered to write their own final chapter. Please help carry out this all-important mission.

SSANY Town Hall Meeting Addresses Poverty in New York State

By
Thomas V. Caprio, M.D.
Ann Brownhill Gubernick, LMSW

Poverty among New Yorkers is increasing. In 2000, the overall poverty rate was 13.9% and increased to 14.7% in 2004-2005. New York State has become known as a State with high incomes. Yet, increasingly New Yorkers are living at or below the poverty rate. Who are the elderly struggling to make ends meet? What impact does poverty among older New Yorkers have on the service delivery systems, on providing food, housing, health care, long term care, and transportation? How can New York State take care of its impoverished elders? What can our elected officials do to address this growing economic challenge? These are just some of the objectives of the Town Hall Meeting held during the October SSANY 35th Annual Conference in Albany, New York.

The annual SSA Town Hall Meeting is sponsored by the SSA Social Policy Committee and is intended to raise awareness on challenging issues and develop a dialogue among participants and panelists about possible solutions across New York State. This year's Town Hall opened with remarks from **Michael Burgess**, Director of the NYS

Office for the Aging. **Mr. Burgess** gave a historical perspective on the development of programs providing assistance to those in need, but emphasized that many services have not kept pace with the rising costs of today. **James O'Neal**, SSANY Past President, served as moderator for the subsequent discussion with a distinguished group of panelists. **Robert Scardamalia**, Chief Demographer from the NY Department of Economic Development, discussed the economic impact of young residents and mid-level wage earners leaving New York State due to job losses along with a positive migration of age 85 and older back to New York. **Jessica Walker**, Policy Associate with the NY Academy of Medicine and board member of the NY Citizen's Committee on Aging, discussed the challenges faced by New York City. NYC has the second highest elder poverty rate in the country (20.3%). Detroit, MI has the highest at 20.5%. In addition, 12.1% of seniors living in NYC are both poor and disabled - twice the rate of national average. These urban older residents spend significant proportions of their income on housing costs and often live alone.

So what can be done from a legislative standpoint to address poverty? **Robert Herz**, Legislative Director/Committee Director for the NYC Senate Committee on Aging, Senator **Martin J Golden**, Chair, began the discussion with a review of current incentives such as STAR, caregiver's tax credits, and long-term care compacts. **Mr. Hertz** also expressed concern regarding increasing crimes against the elderly, including financial exploitation, and the need for stiffer penalties to protect elders. **Jennifer Best**, Assembly

Program and Counsel Staff member for NYS Assembly Committee on Aging, Assemblyman **Jeffery Dinowitz**, Chair, spoke about the economic disparity for older women, many of whom live alone and at poverty levels. **Ms. Best** discussed the need for improvements in housing to allow individuals to age in place.

Harvey Catchen, PhD, Professor SUNY at Old Westbury and Author of the Project 2015 Article on Poverty concluded the panel discussion by speaking about the pressures that will continue to mount from SSI and Medicare. The well-attended Town Hall also provided the opportunity for those present to submit questions to the panelists. The final discussion covered a variety of topics including immigrant populations, improving services to older adults at risk, and enhancing the housing options. The morning concluded with final remarks by **Deborah Heiser, PhD**, SSANY President-Elect, who charged the audience with continuing to examine the complexity of these issues surrounding poverty and thanked everyone for an engaging and productive discussion.

Message From Immediate Past President Pat Brownell

As I look back over the past year, I am proud of all that the State Society on Aging of New York (SSANY) and its Board and members have accomplished! Most recently SSANY sponsored a very successful three-day professional conference in Albany, New York, with the support of its partner the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA). The title of the conference: "Addressing

the Opportunities and Challenges of Aging: Local Responses to Global Issues" reflected the theme of the Madrid + 5 review at the United Nations, a five year review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). To my knowledge, SSANY is the only state-based non-government organization (NGO) that held a conference on the implementation of the MIPAA during its first 5 years. Walter Beattie Awardee **Helen R. Hamlin** discussed this theme in her keynote address. The President's Awardee keynote speakers, **Dr. Patricia Bomba**, as well as keynote speakers Monsignor **Charles Fahey**, Commissioner **Edwin Méndez-Santiago**, **Dr. Alejandro Garcia** and **Dr. Elizabeth J. Santos**, and all the presenters amplified on the theme as well. **Cheryl Boyson**, conference chair, did a spectacular job of organizing this conference. In addition to the annual conference and three university-based student conferences across the state, SSANY collaborated with NYSOFA on a listening session initiative to learn more about workforce issues in aging in New York State. The culmination of the 8 listening sessions coordinated by 2007's Immediate past President **Beverly Horowitz**, is a report, jointly produced SSANY and NYSOFA and which summarizes the findings and key recommendations that emerged from the listening sessions. When finalized, the report will be available to SSANY members on our website www.ssany.org. SSANY's very active social policy committee, co-chaired by **Ann Brownhill Gubernick** and **Tom Caprio**, the President-Elect of SSANY, has begun to complete a series of policy statements, the first of which is the Long

Term Care Policy Statement, which is also posted on the SSANY website. Membership expanded thanks to the outstanding work of Membership co-chairs **Louis Vazquez** and **Jackie Berman**, and student membership co-chairs **Martha Bial** and **Christeen Liang**. Ad Hoc Advisor **Carol Hunt** initiated an organizational review process with Board members **James O'Neal** and **Susan Somers** that will continue into 2008. SSANY also produced two newsletters thanks to Publications Chair **Debbie Heiser**, now SSANY's President for 2008, and **Meredith Morris**. All of these initiatives represent opportunities for members to be actively engaged with SSANY, as well as learn about research, education and training, and best practices initiatives in New York State. As the state's foremost interdisciplinary membership organization in gerontology and geriatrics, SSANY appreciates your support and reaches out to continue to engage you and colleagues in the work of the Society. Thank you for a great 2007, and for welcoming incoming President **Dr. Deborah Heiser**!



Patricia Brownell, PhD

Many thanks to Dr. Brownell for all her hard work as 2007 President of SSANY!!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2007 CONFERENCE



Board members come together for a group photo



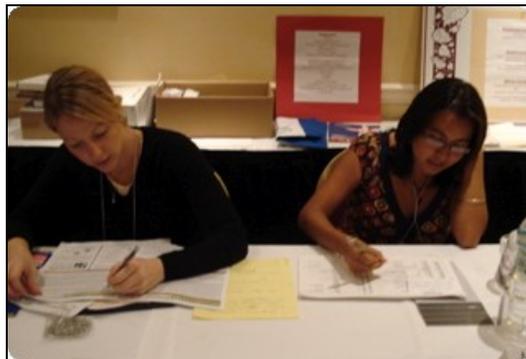
Isabella's Celeste Marrero presents "A Telemedicine Demonstration Project: Depression and Long-Term Care."



Jackie Berman from DFTA and Lisa Furst from the Mental Health Association of NYC discuss how to address the needs of Depressed Older New Yorkers



Dr. William T. Smith, President and CEO of Aging presents Helen R. Hamlin with this years Walter M. Beattie Award



Meredith Morris and Maria Yagual hard at work



Palliative Care for the CNA



Stephanie Low teaches people how to lobby



Jim Collins helps out with conference registration



Patricia Schumacher gives presentation on "The National Family Caregiver Support Program Policy Analysis"

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

ATTENTION SSANY MEMBERS!

SEND US ANY AND ALL UPDATES, NEWS, ARTICLES, PICTURES OF YOURSELF, FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS YOU WOULD WANT TO HAVE POSTED ON OUR WEBSITE.

Send an email with anything you would like to see on the SSANY website to Meredith Morris at mmorris@isabella.org

Visit the SSANY website and read the latest on our members!

www.ssany.org

Start Blogging on the SSA website today!

Our webmaster **Mark Brennan** has created a feature on the SSANY website where you can post blogs. It's a great way to take advantage of the SSA network and interact with other members.

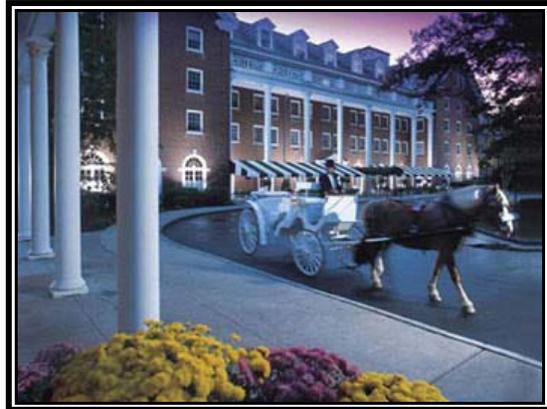
Simply click [SSA Members AGE Blog](#) on the right hand side of the main page and post your comments.

SAVE THE DATE!

What: 2008 Annual SSANY Conference

Where: Gideon Putnam Resort and Spa in Saratoga Springs, NY

When: October 23rd-25th



The Gideon Putnam Resort



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**Jackie Berman, PhD
Chair of Publications**

**Meredith Morris
Co-Editor**



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To become a member of the SSANY visit our website www.ssany.org and fill out an application. Please send all applications to:

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