



# TVES CURRENT

Information from  
TRI-VALLEY ELDER SERVICES, INC.

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**Medicare Offers New Benefits in 2005** — Starting on January 1, 2005, Medicare will cover new preventive benefits including a “Welcome to Medicare Physical” exam, cholesterol and blood lipid screening tests, and diabetes screening tests and services for beneficiaries who are at high risk for diabetes. Medicare will also cover a one-time hospice consultation for terminally ill beneficiaries who are not yet using the hospice benefit.

With the “Welcome to Medicare Physical” exam, all new Medicare Part B beneficiaries, both those younger than 65 and those older than 65, are eligible to receive an initial preventive physical examination within the first six months of enrollment in Medicare Part B. A physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist must perform the physical. The exam includes measurement of height, weight, and blood pressure and an electrocardiogram. It also includes education, counseling and referral for other preventive services covered by Medicare. However the physical exam benefit does not cover payment for lab tests.

Services included in the initial preventive physical exam are subject to the Medicare Part B deductible (\$110 for 2005) and co-insurance payments (20 percent). Beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage (Medicare+Choice) plans should check with their plans about any co-payments required for the exam.

Blood Screening Tests for Cardiovascular Disease promotes early detection of cardiovascular disease among people not yet showing signs or symptoms by providing cholesterol and blood lipid screening tests once every two years. The tests are at no cost to beneficiaries when ordered by their physician, and they are not subject to the Part B deductible or co-payments.

The screening tests include a cholesterol test to measure the beneficiary’s total cholesterol level, HDL cholesterol level, and triglyceride level, and are performed after a 12-hour fasting period.

Diabetes screening tests and services for those at high risk for diabetes will help promote early detection of this disease. All Medicare beneficiaries identified as ‘high-risk’ for diabetes will be able to receive screening tests up to two times per year. The tests are free to beneficiaries who have a referral from a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist and are not subject to the Part B deductible or co-payments. See your Medicare 2005 book for further information regarding “high risk” qualifications. *(continued on page 4)*

## WINTER FOOD PROJECT — A GREAT SUCCESS!



*Marilyn Travinski, Helen Lenti and John Iacobucci  
with some bags of food ready for delivery.*

Tremendous community support was received for the TVES 2004 Winter Food Project dedicated in memory of Gilda Iacobucci Thomas. Gilda was a Southbridge resident and receptionist at Tri-Valley for 14 years until she became ill and passed away in December of 2003. Gilda believed in the mission of Tri-Valley, supported the agency in many of its projects and particularly enjoyed the activity surrounding the Annual Winter Food Project.

According to Gilda’s sister, Helen Lenti of Southbridge, “Our sister, Gilda, was very proud of all the fine work done by everyone at Tri-Valley to assist the elderly; but the Winter Food Project was closest to her heart, and each year she spoke of this and was very touched by the hard work by staff in putting together and delivering the baskets.”

Tri-Valley was honored to receive a \$2500 memorial gift from Gilda’s family, John and Ann Iacobucci and children and Umberto and Helen Lenti and children, to be used toward the Winter Food Project over the next five years.

The annual project, now in its tenth year, provided 8,000 non-perishable meals to frail and needy seniors in the TVES service area, from Bellingham to West Brookfield. Additionally, the Dudley Council on Aging Needlework Group donated dozens of beautiful afghans and lap robes and employees of Schmidt Equipment, Inc. donated pillows, comforters, bedding, personal care items, and pharmacy gift cards. These were sent along with the food bags to a number of seniors in need. TVES appreciates every contribution, large and small, that helped to make this project a reality.

## A Message from Marilyn

After the holidays, we look to the increasing minutes of daily sunshine to warm us toward spring and flowers.

The cold temperatures take their toll on all of us, but especially seniors. Driving, walking and cold temperatures are greater challenges for people who have limited mobility. Also, the shorter days make evening socializing difficult for older folk whose night vision may not be adequate to drive safely.

You can help by inviting a senior out in the evening. Offer to transport an older person to an evening meeting or presentation.

Please remember to check on your elder neighbors more frequently in the winter. Help out by shoveling their walk. As tough as it is for us to be out moving snow and ice in the cold, it's harder for seniors.

Be happy and well.

Marilyn L. Travinski, Executive Director

## SPOTLIGHT: "Wheels for Meals"

### Donate your Auto, Truck or Boat Receive a valuable tax deduction and help a worthy cause!

Portions of funds raised from liquidation of your item will go to charity. Meals-on-Wheels is one of the charities you may select to receive the proceeds from your donated item.

Your donation will help the TVES Meals-on-Wheels Program along with its sister programs across the state.

Meals-on-Wheels are more than a hot lunch. Volunteers who deliver the meals ensure daily contact and a "well-being" check for elders who are home-bound. This program also serves hot nutritious meals to elders at Nutrition Sites. Donate your "Wheels for Meals" today!

For more information, call:

#### TVES Nutrition Program

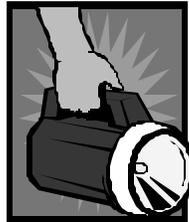
1-800-286-6640

To donate, contact:

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[www.helpinghandsofamerica.org](http://www.helpinghandsofamerica.org)

## HEALTHY LIFESTYLE POWER OUTAGE SAFETY TIPS



It's winter, and that means power outages. So here are a few tips to keep you safe and warm.

**Fireplaces or wood-burning stoves:** Take normal precautions. Never add more wood than usual. Creating a larger fire is potentially hazardous.

**Generators:** Only purchase a generator listed with Underwriter's Laboratories or a similar organization. Never operate a generator inside the home, basement, or garage. Do not connect it directly to your home's electrical system. Always connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator.

**Kerosene or propane heater:** *This method is extremely hazardous and inadvisable.* Always keep heaters at least three feet away from furniture, blankets, and other flammable objects. Never set the heater on a chair, table, or carpeted floor. Never leave the heater unattended. Turn it off before going to bed or leaving the house. Never substitute fuel types. Wait for the heater to cool before refueling. Never run the heater longer than the manufacturer recommends.

**Essential supplies:** Flashlights, batteries, battery-operated radio, bottled water, non-perishable prepared food.

**Other safety tips:** Use a flashlight for emergency lighting. When possible, avoid using candles. Turn off equipment in use when the power went out. Turn on one light to signal power return. Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer. Dress in layers. Wear a hat.

**Medications:** If your medication requires refrigeration, it will keep in the refrigerator for several hours. If unsure, check with your physician or pharmacist.

**Telephones:** Cordless telephones require electricity to work. Keep a standard telephone or cellular telephone on hand.

(continued on page 4)

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Tri-Valley Elder Services, Inc.  
251 Main Street  
Webster, MA 01570-2213

☎ 508-949-6640 or  
1-800-286-6640 (MA only)  
TDD 508-949-6654  
FAX 508-949-6651  
E-mail: [info@tves.org](mailto:info@tves.org)  
Website: [www.tves.org](http://www.tves.org)

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# Caregiver's Corner

## When the Holidays are Over...

...the phones lines at TVES light up constantly. November and December are busy months for family members gathering for holiday dinners and festive occasions. For people who live out of town, it may be the first time in months that they are seeing a parent or an elderly relative. "People spend more time together over a longer period of time. That's when the changes are apparent," said Laura Black Silver, a caregiver specialist at TVES, "and that's when that uncomfortable feeling that something isn't quite right sets in."

Yet oftentimes, people won't discuss their concerns because they don't want to spoil the holidays. But come January, the calls to TVES rush in.

"Families tend to spend long periods of time together at home during the holidays," said Laura. "What we typically hear is that they noticed physical changes or diminished capacities in an aging relative."

Here are some of the red flags:

- Confusion
- House is unkempt
- Unpaid bills
- They aren't changing their clothes
- They don't appear to be bathing regularly
- Difficulty participating in group conversation
- Driving skills are not as sharp
- Difficulty following a recipe

If any of these scenarios sound familiar, you can turn to the TVES Information and Referral (I&R) department (1-800-286-6640) for assistance. "Even if you don't know the exact concern, our I & R specialists will help identify the elder's and/or caregiver's needs and arrange for a **free** home visit with a case manager.

**The brand new  
2005-2006  
Caregiver's Guide  
is now available!**

To obtain the updated edition free of charge, stop by the TVES office or call to make arrangements to receive one.



## Angels among us — Meet Janet Garon

On Janet Garon's desk sits a small, apple-shaped novelty (a loving gift from a staff member) with the words, "I'm Busy. Take a Number." Numbers 1 and 2 were already taken. "I think my assistant keeps number 1 for herself."

Janet Garon is one busy woman. Aside from her responsibilities as wife and mother, Janet is the executive vice president and treasurer of Southbridge Savings Bank, a member and past president of the Downtown Southbridge Partnership, and the treasurer of the annual Festival of Giving Trees cancer fundraiser.

Since 2001, Janet has delivered Meals on Wheels for TVES to homebound elders in Oxford. How does she juggle it all? "By prioritizing. My staff is very aware of my calendar when scheduling appointments. Although my schedule may seem overwhelming, it's surprising how easy it is to get the things you care about done."

What is not surprising is that Janet recently received the George Wild Award for outstanding volunteer service. "As I looked over the field of nominees, I never thought my name would be called. It was like winning a beauty contest. So completely unexpected."

Like Janet, George Wild served TVES as a nutrition center volunteer, as well as in numerous other capacities. George Wild Award nominations come from each meal site.

Delivering Meals on Wheels has been very rewarding for Janet. "I love the people I see each week. Some of the elders don't have visits from anyone else. This is a chance for me to check up on them. If I see a problem, I let the Oxford meal site manager know to look into it."

Janet firmly believes you get back what you give—tenfold. "When my husband and I were first starting out, something had happened and we turned to the United Way for help. We knew, then, we would always give back wherever we could." In addition to her volunteer work with Tri-Valley, Janet assists Harrington Hospital, Notre Dame Parish, the United Way, and Rehabilitative Resources, Inc.

For anyone considering volunteer work, Janet has this advice: "Don't be afraid of the time commitments. You'll very quickly learn it can be done. And you'll be glad you did."

*"Humility is the right estimate of one's self." —  
Charles Haddon Spurgeon*



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**Medicare offers New Benefits in 2005** *(continued from page 1)*

Information for this article was based on Center for Medicare Education fact sheet, *Upcoming Changes to Medicare* and the *Guide to Medicare Preventative Services* booklet.

**The annual Open Enrollment period for the Medigap plans takes place in February and March for an effective date of June 1.**

The SHINE program, Serving Health Information Needs of Elders, provides free, confidential and unbiased health insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. SHINE can be reached at 1-800-243-4636, Option #2.

**TWENTY-FIVE YEAR  
EMPLOYEE SERVICE  
AWARD**

In December 2004, Marilyn Hansen received a 25-year award for her work as a Data Entry Specialist.  
Congratulations, Marilyn!



Left to right: TVES President Irene Garand and Marilyn Hansen.

**POWER OUTAGE SAFETY TIPS** *(continued from page 2)*

**Electric garage door:** Locate the manual release lever and learn how to operate it. Garage doors can be heavy, so get help lifting it.

**Cars:** Keep the fuel tank at least half full. Gas stations need electricity to run pumps.

**People with disabilities:** If you use a battery-operated wheelchair, life-support system, or other power-dependent equipment, call your power company immediately. Many utility companies keep a location map of power-dependent customers. If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, have an extra battery. If possible, keep a lightweight, manual wheelchair as backup.

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