

Winter 2009

Willem Lange, “One of the most beloved storytellers in Northern New England” to present Annual Meeting Keynote Address

You are invited to attend GCSCC's Annual Meeting on Monday, April 6, 2009 at 12:30 p.m. at the Upper Valley Senior Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire.



Will Lange, author of several books and essays, is familiar to many in the region as the writer of the weekly newspaper column “A Yankee Notebook” and as a regular commentator or host on Vermont Public Radio and both Vermont and New Hampshire Public Television. A warm and engaging speaker, Will is sure to entertain and enlighten with his thoughtful

observations of everyday life or his exciting accounts from the travels of the Geriatric Adventure Society which he founded in 1973.

The business portion of the Annual Meeting includes agency reports and the election of officers and board members. The public is invited to join the Upper Valley Senior Center's regular congregate lunch at 11:45 a.m. preceding the meeting at 12:30. Refreshments will follow the meeting.

Reservations for lunch are recommended. Please call Anna Yeager at the Upper Valley Senior Center by March 30th to make a reservation or to request directions. Their phone number is (603)448-4213.

New Year News: A Report from the Director and President

I hope this New Year finds you warm and well. As predicted by many, the downturn in the economy combined with rising costs has left older adults turning to GCSCC in increasing numbers to meet many basic needs. Nutrition and transportation, in particular, have seen rapid growth with seniors trying to reign in their costs while living on fixed incomes. In 2008 we set records for:

- ◆ individuals served (more than 6,900 county-wide)
- ◆ home delivered and congregate meals (close to 220,000)
- ◆ rides on our lift-equipped buses (47,450)
- ◆ supportive social services (more than 12,500 appointments)
- ◆ in-home care and adult day-care services (over 26,000 hours)

While individuals deal with rising expenses, our agency suffers the same effects. An agency-wide hiring freeze was announced in August. Energy cost forecasts were frightening last year but fortunately have been *somewhat* less expensive than expected. The cost of diesel for our buses has been mitigated with falling fuel prices. Pre-buy oil contracts or rate locks were negotiated at a local level for our senior centers so costs there have varied with some contractors voluntarily reducing rates while others have not. We have seen little relief in the area of mileage reimbursement for volunteers and in-home care staff. We reimburse at 5/6th of the federal rate and in many cases are exceedingly grateful that our home-delivered meals volunteers honor their commitments particularly during the winter when driving can be difficult. Finally, food costs have risen tremendously.

In challenging times such as these, our agency must not only focus on the day-to-day task of keeping services in places but also focus on longer-term initiatives. We do this when we: collaborate with other agencies to meet local needs; advocate the importance of our services to local, state and federal officials; and educate and thank our loyal donors, including individuals, businesses and foundations, whose support is so critical. Please read on about these important activities.

Gratefully,

Roberta Berner
Executive Director

Richard Jaeger
President

Grafton County Senior Citizens Council, Inc. is a private nonprofit organization that was incorporated in 1972. It is supported by government grants and contracts, contributions from local towns and Grafton County, contributions from participants, bequests, private grants, charitable donations and the three United Ways that serve our region.

GCSCC's purpose is to develop, strengthen and provide programs and services that support the health, dignity and independence of older adults and adults with disabilities living in our communities. GCSCC achieves its purpose through programs and services offered at senior centers located throughout Grafton County.

Survey Snippets

In an effort to gauge the quality and importance of our programs to the clients we serve, surveys are conducted on a quarterly basis. Here are just a few comments from the fall 2008 survey of home-delivered meal recipients:

“Meals on Wheels are a lifesaver for me”

“I like to have someone stop to say hello each day”

“This is the only meal my husband and I eat together because I don’t have to work to feed us...I could not do full time caretaking without this kind of help and keep my sanity. Thank You”

Of the respondents, 50% reported that the home-delivered meal provides half or more than half of the total food that they eat each day. When asked what was most important about this service, seniors replied consistently that it was *both* the meal and the person who delivered that meal (full disclosure: one senior added the most important part of the meal delivery program was dessert!).

Funding Update

With a growing population of aging adults in a rural area, the need for our services is more important than ever. However and unfortunately, our state and federal funding will remain level at best (and may be cut); some of our local funding is in question and similar to other non-profits, our charitable donations have decreased by 20% thus far this year. Given this situation, we are fortunate to have the support of two exciting funding opportunities:

Byrne Foundation Challenge Grant

The Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation, based in Etna, NH has been a long-time supporter of Grafton County Senior Citizens Council. Recognizing the impact of the reduced private giving on the provision of critical services, the Byrne Foundation has generously pledged \$25,000 in the form of a challenge grant. The *challenge* for GCSCC is to raise \$12,500 (our shortfall in individual giving this year) in new or renewed donations during the first quarter of the calendar year to be eligible for the match.

Feinstein Challenge Grant for Nutrition Programs

The Feinstein Foundation of Rhode Island has again offered a challenge grant to nonprofit nutrition programs such as our home delivered and congregate meal service. The Foundation contributes \$1 million as leverage and invites nonprofits across the U.S. to raise funds and food donations locally from March 1-April 30. In 2008 GCSCC served more than 220,000 meals--thousands beyond those subsidized by state and federal sources. Only with private contributions can we meet the needs without placing anyone on a waiting list. In addition, GCSCC operates food pantries at several Senior Centers to help neighbors with emergency need for food.

We hope you’ll consider participating in either of these special challenge grants by sending your contribution to us in the envelope enclosed in this newsletter.

WARM Fund and Two-minute Checklist

In anticipation of the far-reaching consequences of a winter heating-oil crisis, a coalition of 20 nonprofit organizations came together in an effort organized by the Upper Valley United Way and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC) Community Health Improvement and Benefits Office to create the Winter Assistance Resource Management Fund (WARM). Grafton County Senior Citizens Council was a member of this coalition, representing the concerns of older adults in the region. The WARM Fund will be used to help weatherize homes, educate consumers on the use of safe and efficient heating sources, and provide direct fuel aid.

To further the efforts and mission of the WARM Fund, Greg Norman at the DHMC Community Health Improvement and Benefits Office with the assistance of GCSCC, created a 'Two-minute checklist' for its volunteers and home-delivered meals staff who are in a good position to help identify seniors who may be at risk. Those identified would be referred for follow-up by outreach workers or other staff of the Senior Citizens Council. Following is a sample checklist:

1. Gauge temperature nearer end of visit to give yourself a chance to acclimate after being outdoors. Touch a wall or tabletop surface to help gauge temperature.
Follow up comment: "It's pretty chilly in here, are you cold?"
2. Is there frost/ice visible on inside of windows?
Follow up comment: "Got a little frost, I see, are things a little drafty?"
3. How is the person dressed? An overabundance of clothes may indicate chronic cold temperature.
Follow-up comment: "You're dressed warm today, feeling cold?"
4. Are there non-traditional heating systems (cook stoves, grills, portable electric space heaters, portable kerosene heaters, etc.)
Follow-up comment: "I see you have a (for example, kerosene heater). Do you use it?"
Follow-up action: Notify program director ASAP.
5. Are all visible heating systems (other than electric) vented (chimney) to outside?
Follow-up comment: "Do you have a vent for this? The fumes from this can seriously injure or kill you if you don't."
Follow-up action: Notify program director ASAP.
6. Are rooms closed off?
Follow-up comment: "I see you have your back room closed off. Trying to save on your heating bill?"
7. Does the person visually appear ill?
Follow-up comment: "You look down today. Are you feeling ill? Are you able to get to a doctor?"
Follow-up action: If person is ill and you have a concern about cold temperatures in the home, notify Program Director.
8. If concerned for any reason, ask: "How are you doing with heating this year? Fuel is pretty expensive."

ServiceLink

The Grafton County ServiceLink Resource Center serves as the agent for the New Hampshire State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). This program helps people understand Medicare and its various benefits and options. November 15th through December 31st was the open enrollment period for Medicare D (prescription drug plans) and there was a flurry of phone calls, office visits and home visits as the staff advised Medicare-eligible clients on their options and helped them fill out the necessary enrollment paperwork. In total, ServiceLink assisted 687 older adults in the final quarter of the year.

ServiceLink and the New Hampshire Family Caregiver Support Program will be sponsoring 'Powerful Tools for Caregivers' classes at Speare Memorial Hospital in Plymouth from March 26th through April 30th. This educational program is designed for those caring for someone with chronic illness such as dementia, heart disease, Parkinson's disease or stroke. Through a series of six, 2 ½ hour classes, caregivers will learn the skills they need to reduce stress, balance their lives, and locate helpful resources. Classes are free but pre-registration is required. If you, or someone you know, could benefit from this program, please contact ServiceLink at 1-866-634-9412 or by email at jconklin@gcsc.org

'Mapping the Aging Maze' Community Forum

Both Roberta Berner, Executive Director of GCSCC, and Dana Michalovic, Grafton County ServiceLink Resource Center Director, were involved as planners and presenters at 'Mapping the Aging Maze', an inaugural community forum held in West Lebanon at the end of January. The program, free of charge and open to the public, was sponsored by The Dartmouth Centers for Health and Aging and the DHMC Community Health Improvement and Benefits Office, and brought together leaders in social services, healthcare, and government-based organizations to discuss collaborative solutions to the challenges of an aging population. Over 100 people attended the daylong program which featured presentations by Kathleen Otte from the Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services for the State of New Hampshire and Joan Senecal, Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living for the State of Vermont. A follow-up session is planned for later in the year with hopes to establish smaller, interactive working groups to focus on systems improvements.

RSVP & The Volunteer Center

Volunteers go to jail! The Grafton County Department of Corrections has been hosting 'Thresholds & Decisions' classes since 1990. A training program for volunteers to teach decision making skills using a professionally designed curriculum will be held in Haverhill on March 28th. The volunteer's commitment is twice a week for five weeks. Another training is planned in May for volunteers wishing to serve at the Sullivan County Community Corrections Center. RSVP & The Volunteer Center helps people of all ages find volunteer opportunities in Grafton and Sullivan Counties that match their schedule, skills, and interests. For more information, email rsvp@gcsc.org, call toll free 1-877-711-7787 or visit the website at www.rsvptoday.org/yourworld.

Staff Transitions

Welcome to several new GCSCC staff members: Joseph Swain, adult in-home caregiver; John Simpson, ServiceLink information and referral specialist in Littleton; Terry Rousseau, receptionist under the auspices of the Senior Community Employment Program (SCSEP); Nancy Lindahl, annual fund & sponsorship coordinator; Gail Emmons-Shaw, outreach worker at Mascoma Area Senior Center; David Nelson, bus driver for both Upper Valley and Mascoma Area Senior Centers; and Mari Bucklaw, program assistant for the Adult-In-Home Care program. Welcome back to Louise Vachon, who has returned to the GCSCC Administrative Office as a part-time receptionist under the SCSEP program.

Congratulations to Helen LaPlaca who has been promoted to Director of In-Home Services for GCSCC. In this role, Helen oversees a staff of dedicated caregivers who provide much-needed services to our most vulnerable clients in an area extending from Grafton to Orford.

And a very fond farewell to Carol Dustin, Senior Social Worker at Mascoma Area Senior Center and former GCSCC Executive Director who has dedicated her career to the provision of high-quality elder services in our community.

GCSCC Programs

Horse Meadow Senior Center—Social activities abound to keep seniors busy during the winter months including: a potluck dinner and game night; a singles breakfast; a monthly Taste Testers Club which chooses a recipe to prepare, eat and rate together; and an afternoon of facials and spa treatments.

Linwood Area Senior Services— Fundraising activities for a new lift-equipped bus continue with a Spaghetti Dinner scheduled for February. The last dinner was sold-out and the staff is grateful for the support of several area businesses and restaurants that have donated food for the event.

Littleton Area Senior Center—The senior center was chosen as the recipient of the North Country United Way ‘Day of Caring’. Volunteers from the community donated their time to build a new conference room with materials donated by Lowe’s Home Improvement Center. Upcoming activities include a pot-luck chocolate dessert for the Valentine’s Day Luncheon and ongoing fundraising events for a Wii Fit™.

Mascoma Area Senior Center—A long-awaited replacement bus will be delivered to the center in February. Several social and educational activities are scheduled for the upcoming months including: ‘Wise Up on Meds’ a seminar co-sponsored by Alice Peck Day Hospital and Enfield Family Pharmacy; country music with local favorites Sonny George & Friends; and an afternoon of Rhyme! Reason! Rhythm! where seniors are invited to hear original poetry and creative writing or share something of their own.

Newfound Area Senior Center—Seniors were treated to a fabulous Chinese New Year Luncheon on February 2nd complete with red tablecloths and festive lantern centerpieces created by students from Newfound Area Regional High School. A highlight of the lunch was when seniors shared their fortune cookie ‘fortunes’. The craft group, which meets on a weekly basis, recently donated a collection of knitted hats, mittens, and sweaters to the local elementary school.

Orford Area Senior Services— Brian Jones, recipient of an Albert Schweitzer Fellowship and student at Vermont Law School, made a well-attended and well-received presentation to residents on the financial exploitation of elders with tips on how to avoid frauds and scams that can have devastating consequences. We are grateful for Brian's public outreach efforts to combat elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Several other senior centers have scheduled Brian to come and speak.

Plymouth Regional Senior Center—Improvements to the second floor of the center are almost complete with the purchase of new furnishings and computers. The beautiful new space includes a full craft room, game room, computer lab, and conference center. A 'Grand Opening' is being scheduled for the Spring. The center is a hub of activity with weekly tai chi, yoga, and woodcarving classes. A full gym on the first floor is open daily.

Upper Valley Senior Center—A quiet library space is being enjoyed by seniors thanks to Bill Mitchell, a volunteer who built new bookshelves. A host of new and ongoing activities continues such as the 'Matter of Balance' and 'Living Strong' classes as well as weekly line-dancing and seasonal tax-preparation sponsored by AARP.

GCSCC Online

To find out more about the services that Grafton County Senior Citizens Council provides, visit our website at www.gcsc.org. Under the *Locations* tab, there is a link to each of the senior centers with the names of our staff, directions to the center and general information about ongoing programs. If you click on *View Our Newsletters* you can access most of the centers' monthly newsletters which list daily activities, luncheon menus and other community events.

Also, GCSCC has become a partner of the nonprofit organization, "Just Give!" This national organization provides a way for community organizations to accept on-line donations safely and with ease for the donor. You can simply go to www.gcsc.org and access the "Just Give!" logo to make a donation via credit card to support elder services in our communities.



This coupon entitles the bearer to
ONE FREE LUNCH
At your Senior Center

Contact the Center to find out about specific menus and serving times.
Try it! You'll like it!
Or use this coupon to invite a friend to join you.

Please note:
Suggested donation for lunch is \$3 for diners over age 60;
\$6.25 for others.



Clip and Save Coupon

GCSCC Annual Meeting

The April 6th meeting will include election of Officers and Board Members.

The Nominating Committee and Board of Directors propose the following slate of Directors and Officers:

First term Board Members

Serving a 1st term to expire in 2012

The Rev. Gail Dimick, Orford
Melissa Martin, Lebanon
J. Pete Moseley, Lebanon

Serving a 1st term to expire in 2011

Annie LaBrecque, Canaan
Frank Stiegler, Haverhill
Pepper Enderson, Littleton

Serving a 1st term to expire in 2010

Rich Crocker, Plymouth
Molly Scheu, Hanover
Jim Varnum, Etna

Second Term Board Members

Serving a 2nd Term to Expire in 2012

Jenny Littlewood, Orford
S. Arnold Shields, Piermont
Laurel Spielberg, Hanover

Serving a 2nd Term to Expire in 2011

Ralph Akins, Lebanon
Tony Moehrke, Meriden
Dr. Thomas S. Brown, Lebanon

Serving a 2nd Term to Expire in 2010

Dick Jaeger, Orange

Nominated as GCSCC Officers

President

Dick Jaeger, Orange
(2008-2010)

Vice President

Jim Varnum, Etna
(2009-2011)

Treasurer

J. Pete Moseley, Lebanon
(2009-2011)

Secretary

Dr. Thomas S. Brown, Lebanon
(2008-2010)

GCSCC operates through a number of committees that invite dedicated volunteers to serve, in addition to Board members. These committees report to the Board of Directors regularly. If you are interested in serving on a GCSCC committee, please contact the office at the address, phone number and/or e-mail noted on the first page of this newsletter. Committees include Finance, Facilities, Program Planning & Evaluation, Personnel, and Marketing & Development. In addition, GCSCC programs rely heavily on local committees of volunteer leaders. Each Senior Center has an Advisory Council that meets monthly. Last year, GCSCC relied on 921 volunteers to help provide services as well as to help lead the agency. We welcome your involvement.