

Health Fair

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comed the participants to the four-hour health fair and spoke about its significance and sponsor organizations — HSS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with CMS, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

“One of our goals here at the Martin Luther King Senior Center is to promote health and wellness. We are hosting this health fair in conjunction with the [CMS], who chose to tour only two senior centers in the state of Nevada, and we were very fortunate to be selected as one of those sites. It is a pleasure for us to host this event here today.”

Among the speakers at the event were Clark County Commissioner Lawrence Weekly, Regional Director Tom Lorentzen of the HSS, Rita Meier of the Social Security Administration and Dr. Charlotte Yeh, acting CMS regional administrator.

Each of the attendees received a complimentary bag of information and resource materials covering the benefits they were eligible for, the Medicare health insurance options and prescription drug plan enrollment process, accessing Medicare information online, and tips on how to get and stay healthy at age 50 and older.

The MLK Senior Center serves about 827 enrolled members, and they monitor the health and well-being of each client through case managers.

In November, another open-enrollment process through Medicare will commence, and case managers will review each member's history and determine the best medical coverage available for them.

Medicare benefits cover major health testing and disease prevention.

Mammograms, Pap tests and pelvic exams are provided for breast and cervical cancer screenings; for men, prostate cancer screenings are highly critical for early detection and treatment advantages.

Many of these screenings are free or at reduced costs to Medicare beneficiaries:

- flu and pneumonia shots
- cardiovascular screening
- cholesterol, lipid and triglyceride levels
- colorectal cancer screening and colonoscopy
- fecal occult blood testing
- sigmoidoscopy tests
- barium enema tests
- diabetes screening

- bone mass measurement
- hepatitis B shots
- glaucoma tests
- smoking cessation

Information is also available on the website www.MyMedicare.gov.

Mary Jennings said, “The opportunity to get to know what services are available for seniors to monitor their health in North Las Vegas got me to attend today.”

Jennings spoke of a problem faced by many seniors, “When you don't know what's available for free or at a reduced cost, you either wind up paying more for services or not having them performed at all. It's sometimes difficult deciding should you pay your bills or buy your prescription, having food on your table or paying for other necessities.”

Shirley Jackson said she benefited by receiving “more information about changing my Medicare benefits package.” She added, “Seniors need all the information and reminders that we can get to help us take care of ourselves. I'm age 71, and I want to keep going and enjoying my life.”

Several attendees encouraged seniors to be proactive and participate in self-care activities.

Carole Randolph stated: “The activities that were offered at the health fair today motivated me to attend the event. The health screenings and the massage that I received was greatly appreciated, and the information that they provided to help me take charge of my health was beneficial as a senior. My lower back and neck feels much better after the massage; it relieved a lot of the stress and tension that I had.”

Lorraine Gordon expressed the importance of physical and mental healthcare.

“It's important to know that you're all right health wise; you can see, you can hear, and that your mental faculties are okay. I do a lot of walking every day around 6:30 a.m. for an hour or so, trying to maintain good health. I eat right, never consumed alcohol or cigarettes, so I know what I need to do to stay as healthy as I can.”

At least one provider addressed ways to deal with the non-physical concerns many seniors face. In addition to standard screenings, Mark Simmons, one of the healthcare providers, wanted to measure their memory and retention capacity.

In the exercises, partici-

pants were given thinking tasks and asked basic questions: name the day of the week; name as many animals as possible in one minute; remember five objects and recall them later; listen to a story and remember some of the details about it, and perform a basic mathematic problem involving money.

“It is a way for individuals who feel that they may be suffering from memory loss to check on their memory capacity, to get tested in a non-clinical environment and not be reported to their insur-

ance agent or their physician,” Simmons said.

He named the advantages. “If you get diagnosed early, you can fight this condition because there is no cure for memory loss, but there are physical symptoms that mimic memory loss, and if you treat it early you can help to retain your memory and retention capacity longer.

However, if you do wind up getting Alzheimer's or dementia, you can work to prolong your independence instead of putting you head in the sand, giving up and get-

ting worse.”

Joe White, who participated in the memory exercise, said, “I appreciated the opportunity to examine my memory and retention and know how I scored on this test. This will help me plan for my future, and if I find myself approaching any problems in the future, I know what steps I can take to help myself.”

Recently, the Martin Luther King Senior Center, formerly part of the Economic Board of Clark County, has come under the

umbrella of another community agency, according to Davis, the center's director.

“It just happened right before the [health fair]. The change means that our governing office is now the Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League,” said Davis, who said she invites calls at their new phone number, (702) 636-0064, for more information about the center's health assistance programs, resources and other wellness events.

Parker Philpot contributed to this story.

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