Your Help Is Needed!

MEOC’s 39th Annual Walkathon Set for May 3rd

Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) needs your help. The 39th Annual Walkathon, which raises money for the Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly (EFF), is set for Sunday, May 3rd. The Walkathon will be held at Union High School in Big Stone Gap. Registration will begin at 1:00 pm and the Walk will officially begin at 2:00 pm. Please make plans to join us this year!

This winter, MEOC has assisted 1,356 home-heating related emergencies. This winter began calm and ended with disaster. Catastrophic weather, as a result of -20 degree temperatures coupled with more than 20” of snow, caused major damage to many homes and local businesses. The damage was devastating to southwest Virginia. As a result of the weather, electric bills have increased and many older persons needed twice the fuel resources, such as coal, gas, oil and wood, just to stay warm through the end of March. During the two week winter storm, MEOC responded to over 85 emergencies totaling over $25,000 in expenses. It is critical that MEOC has a very successful Walkathon to meet demand and assist all who are in need of assistance with winter weather related expenses. “Requests are increasing and the number of persons who are becoming eligible are also increasing,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler. “During the winter of 2010, MEOC served 926

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Longtime MEOC supporter Dr. Art VanZee, St. Charles Health Clinic of Stone Mountain Health Services, pictured jogging at the 2014 Walkathon. Art has participated in every walkathon since the beginning and remembers vividly the days when the walk was 10 miles and not a 10 K. Thanks so much Art and we all plan on seeing you at our 39th Annual Walkathon!

Pictured from left are Team Jazzercise walkers Delores Smith, Vanessa Cyphers, Barbara Muir, Linda Davidson and Natasha Kennedy supporting the cause in the 2014 MEOC Walkathon. We appreciate their involvement so much. They look like they are having a super fun time while supporting a great cause! Come join them this year!
The picnic after the Walkathon is a wonderful time to relax and catch up with friends and family. Grilled hamburgers, hamburger fixings, baked beans, chips, drink and dessert are served immediately after the Walkathon. The 2014 Walkathon picnic was held in the cafeteria of the new Union High School facility. Gemma, Walter, Nathan and Nicole Aguirre are enjoying food and family time at the 2014 Walkathon picnic!

From left, Callie Ruth Greer, Big Stone Gap, is a 25 year veteran of MEOC walkathons having started her first one as a preschooler. Baby Zero was last year’s youngest participant shown "strolling" along with his mother Callie Ruth and father Dallas Kennedy.

Teresa Talley, Norton Elementary School, center, has a good looking group of walkers with her at last year’s walk. Sure hope to see them again this year! Norton Elementary School has strongly supported MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly for many years raising thousands of dollars each year. MEOC deeply appreciates their efforts and involvement.

Team Wise County Department of Social Services (DSS) and their families joined us for the 38th Annual Walkathon. From left, Christine Blair, Daniel Blair, Jessica Gullett, Whitney Bolling, Sydney Waddell, Jessica Turner, Jeannie Mullins, Bailey Willis, Matt Field and Hannah Gullett (in wagon) represent the staff of Wise County Department of Social Services at the Walkathon. MEOC and our region’s DSS partner with and support each other on so many efforts. Thanks, Team Wise County DSS!

Appalachian Service Project (ASP) staff from Lee County were very helpful volunteers at the busy registration tables at the 38th Annual Walkathon. ASP provides exceptional service year round to people with home repair needs. They work with volunteers to meet one of the greatest unmet needs in our region. MEOC is grateful for the work of ASP in our region.
Mountain Empire Transit is so critical to the success of the Walkathon. Three members of Mountain Empire Transit pictured are Scott Collins, Big Stone Gap, David Ramsey, Wise and Anthony Dooley, Coeburn enjoying a break in the sunshine at the 2014 Walkathon.

(Below right) Pictured is Jo Stewart, Wise, participating in the 38th Annual Walkathon. Jo and her sisters Pat Bevins and Frankie Holbrook have been strong supporters of MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly for many decades. Sisterhood is powerful!

Walkathon tee shirts are awarded to walkers who raise $100 or more. Walkathon tee shirts, different in design and color each year, are collectors’ items. Pictured from left, MEOC Pharmacy Connect Case Manager Bridgett McCoo and In-Home and Family Support Services Director Julia Dillon are pictured giving shirts out at last year’s Walkathon. The 2014 tee shirt’s theme was Warm Today, Healthy Tomorrow, Safe Always. Come to Walk 2015 and go home with a walkathon tee shirt symbolic of your concern for our area’s older citizens and MEOC’s appreciation of you.

It is an exciting time each year when The Union High School Band officially kicks off the Walkathon and leads the walkers to the course. Here they are pictured leading the 38th Annual Walkathon.
Last year, the over 300 walkers enjoyed the sunny, cool day visiting along the easy to walk, safe route between Union High School and The Big Stone Gap Elementary School. You can meet your friends coming and going while making new friends along the way. Water and refreshments are served to walkers and all enjoy a tasty picnic meal at the close of the walk.

From left, State AARP Executive Board President Bob Blancato, MEOC Executive Director Emeritus Marilyn Pace Maxwell and AARP Local Chapter member Stan Botts, Jr. walked together at the 38th Annual Walkathon held last May. AARP is a strong partner and supporter of MEOC and vice versa.

Lisa Whisman and fellow members of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Keokee in Lee County are pictured before the kick-off of the 2014 Walk. Their team was well represented and enjoyed the fellowship while being of service to others. Maybe your church would like to walk as a team!

(Right) We work very closely with staff from Old Dominion Power Company all year long and are always happy to see their team at our annual Walkathon. Pictured from left, Eula Holbrook, Gail Porter, DeRonda Brown and Samantha Stanley.
Walk

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older persons with the Emergency Fuel Fund. This year, MEOC has assisted 1356 older persons, over 400 more than five years before,” added Wampler.

Funds for the Emergency Fuel Fund come solely from donations, contributions and fundraising events from community individuals, schools, businesses, churches and civic groups. This program receives no federal or state funding.

For the past thirty-eight years, concerned community members of all ages have gathered on the first Sunday afternoon in May for the annual Walkathon, the major fundraiser established to assist older people trapped in weather related emergency situations during winter months. Each year at this time, the Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly is running low on funds and MEOC and its community partners begin planning for this very important event, which will replenish the fund. Without the support and dedication of the community throughout the three-county area, MEOC would not have an Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly.

The Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly, a program of MEOC and the community, assists older people with emergencies during the winter months. The program begins each year on October 1st and ends the following March 31st.

The Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly, a program of MEOC and the community, assists older people with emergencies during the winter months. The EFF assists older people who are facing life-threatening situations through no fault of their own. Older people struggling to pay for the bare necessities on small retirement checks are having a very difficult time coping with the increased heating fuel prices. Often, the older person has high prescription drug and health care expenses not covered by a third party. A death or illness in the family can also cause an emergency financial situation. Day-to-day living expenses are more than his or her monthly check can cover; income is simply too small and stretched too thin. Many older persons are raising grandchildren. So far this winter, MEOC spent $232,480 keeping older friends, relatives and neighbors warm, safe and secure in their own homes. Every cent is spent for the intended purpose of assisting older people trapped in emergency home-heating situations. Not one cent is spent for any other purpose.

It is not too late for your organization or business to become involved as a community sponsor. Those organizations and businesses contributing $5,000 or more will not only have their name and logo printed on the back of the MEOC Walkathon tee shirts; they will be linked on MEOC’s website and Facebook contact MEOC to get your pledge form. Walkathon forms will be immediately sent to you so that you can begin collecting your pledges.

If you are unable to walk, but would like to support the cause, your contribution can be sent to MEOC, P.O. Box 888, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219. Please designate your contribution for the EFF/Walkathon program. Everyone can help spread the word by telling family, friends, and neighbors about this event.

In case of inclement weather, the Walk will be postponed and rescheduled for Sunday, May 17th. The postponement will be announced on all local radio stations and on the MEOC Facebook page. If in doubt, please call MEOC.

For more information about how to get involved in this year’s Walkathon or how to become a community sponsor, contact MEOC at 276-523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362.

Are you 55 or older, low-income and looking for part-time work?

Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. (MEOC) in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, administers a Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (Older Worker Program) in Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton.

Eligible applicants must be 55 years of age or older, low income, available to work up to 20 hours per week and be a resident of Virginia. Participants are enrolled with nonprofit community organizations for an average 20 hour per week training to upgrade or learn new job skills.

If you are interested in finding out more about this program, please call Debbie Sanders or Cindy Robinette at 276-523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362.
Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) has good news to share with older persons in Wise County and the City of Norton. Persons 60 years of age and older can apply for the 2015 Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) on or after May 1st. MEOC will soon be given a limited number of books of checks to distribute to eligible residents of Wise County and Norton City. Checks worth $40 will be distributed on a first come, first served basis and can be used at area farmers markets beginning July 1st through the close of the markets. This program is designed to improve nutrition of older persons while also helping local farmers sell their locally grown fruits, vegetables and freshly cut herbs. Markets are located in Norton, Wise, Coeburn, Big Stone Gap and Saint Paul.

MEOC wants to make sure that all wishing and eligible to participate have the opportunity to do so. The application process, done by telephone or in-person at MEOC, takes no more than 2 minutes to complete.

Each person enrolled in this program will receive one book of checks worth $40. Each eligible person within a household is eligible to receive one book of checks. The check books contain eight $5 checks that seniors can spend like cash to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs from farmers at local farmers markets who have been pre-approved by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

To be eligible for the Farmers Market coupons, one must: be 60 years of age or older, live in Wise County or the city of Norton, and have an income equal to or below 150% of poverty (for one individual the income limit is $1,471/month, for two individuals the income limit is $1,991/month).

To apply by telephone, or to get more information, call MEOC at 276-523-4202 or 1-800-252-6362 and ask for Rachel Helton.

Mountain Empire Older Citizens is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Duck Race
June 13th @ 2pm

Tickets $5.00 each!!!

Grand Prize $1000.00
2nd place $500.00
3rd place $250.00
4th place $150.00
5th place $100.00
6th-10th place $50.00

All proceeds go to MEOC’s Fuel Fund for the Elderly and Heritage Hall’s Resident Christmas Fund.

Vendors and Yard Sales Welcome!!!

For tickets, contact MEOC at 276-523-4202 or Heritage Hall at 276-523-3000
Mountain View Regional Medical Center Auxiliary Donates Much Needed Funds to the Emergency Fuel Fund of Mountain Empire Older Citizens

The Mountain View Regional Medical Center Auxiliary in Norton recently donated $2,000 to MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly. For many years, the Auxiliary has chosen to support the Emergency Fuel Fund with funds raised from sales at the Mountain View Regional Medical Center gift shop. MEOC is so very thankful for the support of the Mountain View Regional Medical Center Auxiliary, long time supporters and partners of MEOC programs and services. This donation came at a much needed time because of the recent snow storms and bitter cold temperatures.

Hearthwarming Sunday’s Annual Boost to Emergency Fuel Fund Comes at Critical Time

Hearthwarming Sunday, an annual fundraiser of area churches and people of faith in support of MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly, has been celebrated for the past 40 years on the Sunday closest to Valentine’s Day. Given the record-breaking snows and low temperatures, most churches were unable to meet during much of February, but did reschedule the event during a Sunday in March.

The contributions from “Hearthwarming Sunday” traditionally come at a critically important time for MEOC’s Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly. The program officially begins on October 1st using funds raised in MEOC’s preceding annual May walkathon. The program officially ends the last day of March. The Emergency Fuel Fund finds itself operating on faith during the months of February and March and the funding efforts of the religious community and people of faith assure that the program does not become insolvent. At press time, over $18,000 had been donated with more donations anticipated.

The donations from this year’s Hearthwarming Sunday were even more important than usual given the more than three feet of snow which fell during February and early March and the Arctic temperatures which kept the region paralyzed for days at a time. Emergency fuel needs among the elderly skyrocketed with MEOC responding to 85 more situations during February and March than last year during these months. At press time, MEOC had assisted 1,356 older persons with a home heating related emergency this program year, a record for MEOC’s forty year old Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly.

“Not only has recent snow and ice caused electric bills to be higher and home heating fuel sources to be used more quickly, but many homes have suffered structural and flood damage. This is devastating for older persons on fixed and low incomes who are struggling just to meet their basic needs”, said MEOC’s Director of Elder Rights Rachel Helton.

“The invaluable support of people of faith and the entire faith community has been more important than ever this year and we at MEOC are so very thankful and appreciative for their passionate, steady and enthusiastic embracing of the needs of our area’s frail and at risk older persons. Without the year round involvement of our religious community and their exceptionally noteworthy efforts as part of the Hearthwarming Sunday initiative, many of our region’s older citizens would be at grave risk. Their help has been life enhancing and in many cases life saving for our older friends and neighbors,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler.
MEOC Volunteer Program Recruiting: Let Us Count You In!

Have some extra time on your hands and want to help your friends and neighbors? Interested in helping out your community and providing a service to others? Then Mountain Empire Older Citizens Volunteer Program is looking for you!

MEOC has several volunteer opportunities available. Volunteers are needed within MEOC offices for Children's Services, PACE (Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly) to assist with agency mailings), to deliver liquid nutrition to cancer patients and others in the community, and also to provide transportation to persons in Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton through MEOC's Volunteer Driver Program. You don't have to drive one of our buses!!

The Volunteer Driver Program, which is funded through Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), began at MEOC in 2009 and seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities according to Nicky Fleenor, Mountain Empire Transit Mobility Manager.

"As word gets out about the program, we are seeing an increase in the demand for the service, so more volunteers are needed," Fleenor said.

She explained that the majority of volunteer driver trips are to the Tri-Cities area to specialty medical facilities, such as The Heart Center at Meadowview, Indian Path Medical Center and Holston Valley Medical Center, Blue Ridge Medical in Bristol and the VA Medical Center in Johnson City.

“The Volunteer Driver can provide one-on-one assistance with the individual, they can sit with them while they are taking their treatments and really be attentive to their needs,” Fleenor said.

She noted that the volunteers can also serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for their riders at their doctor’s appointments. If a client has a visual or hearing impairment, the volunteer can help them relay the information the doctor has provided back to the person’s family at their request. “Some of the passengers we transport don’t really get a lot of visitors and I’ve had passengers tell me that the time they spend with the volunteer means so much to them,” she said.

For volunteer Ethel Daniels of Norton, the socialization is one of the main reasons she has chosen to participate in the program. Daniels provides a volunteer service by delivering liquid nutritional supplements, such as Ensure, to those in need. “I volunteer to visit with people who need more social interaction,” Daniels said. “They look forward to visits from someone who cares.”

If you are interested in getting involved with MEOC’s Volunteer Program, please contact Nicky Fleenor at 276.523.7433.

Volunteer Priscilla Sharpe has been delivering liquid nutrition in the Big Stone Gap area since May 2011. When asked why she volunteered, Priscilla said, “My husband and I started delivering because my job encouraged involvement in the community. We have always been impressed with all the benefits MEOC provides to our community. We continued even after my retirement because it is a blessing to us. We have met some wonderful people and it makes us aware of the great need in our area. It is a small way we can help.”

Volunteer Julie Witt has delivered liquid nutrition in the St. Charles and Pennington Gap areas since July 2011.
What do we do when we retire and take with us a wealth of knowledge, experience, skills and maturity? Are those resources just put on a shelf and forgotten, never to be used again? And, what does the future hold for a child who has specific needs, but is in a large class unable to get the one-on-one attention needed to develop properly. Do these children just slip through the cracks?

These situations are happening all around us and it is sad, but there is a possible solution: the Foster Grandparents Program at Mountain Empire Older Citizens. This program remains true to its original goal of having those with maturity and experience to establish a personal relationship with children having either exceptional or specific needs. The local program, which began in 1997, and covers the area of Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton, seeks senior volunteers with a limited income to meet critical community needs, to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of those volunteers and the children they serve. Program funds are used to support Foster Grandparents in providing supportive, one-on-one service to children having exceptional or specific needs under the direction of the classroom teacher and the program director.

The Foster Grandparents Program currently partners with 22 schools and Head Start facilities in Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and the City of Norton placing 27 volunteers who serve approximately 85+ children. These volunteers, if they meet the requirements and are enrolled, will receive a monthly stipend for the 15 to 40 hours per week they work that will not interfere with any income they currently receive. They also are provided free transportation. In most cases, to and from their assigned school or are reimbursed for mileage if they use their own vehicle. They can have lunch, if available, provided at the school. Volunteers also receive an annual physical exam, supplemental insurance, annual leave time, holiday pay and monthly in-service training on topics relevant to seniors and working with children. But most importantly, they have a chance to make a difference in the life of a child.

Some of the remarks on volunteer assessments are heartwarming. “Ms. Ruth was a great listener when Johnny lost his 13 year old brother. He found her easy to talk to.” “The child has improved with the help of Ms. Sheila. She is more social and her literary skills have improved.” “Anna confides in ‘Granny’ because she has developed a trusting bond with her.” “Timmy came being able to recognize 2-3 letters. Now he knows them all and can write his name.”

The impact on communities may not be seen for several years as these children are currently being “fostered” by the volunteers. However, the impact on the kids and the seniors is apparent every day! For more information about the Foster Grandparents Program at MEOC, please contact Director Bill Dotson at (276) 523-4202 or toll free at (800) 252-6362. Now accepting new applications for Foster Grandparents, so please give us a call.

**SENIOR CITIZENS — Are you looking for an opportunity to serve?**

The Foster Grandparents Program at Mountain Empire Older Citizens needs you.

If you are:
- Age 55 or older
- Have a limited income
- Love to work with children... you may qualify.

Foster Grandparents work in schools and Head Start programs with young special needs children under the direction of the teacher and the program director. Some of the benefits are:

- You receive: a tax-free monthly stipend for working 15-40 hours per week. This stipend does not affect any income you now receive.
- Paid vacation and sick leave.
- Free transportation or mileage reimbursement if you use your own vehicle.
- Annual physical exam.
- Supplemental insurance.
- Monthly in-service training on topics relevant to seniors.

More importantly, you get to make a difference in the life of a child.

If you are interested, please call Program Director Bill Dotson at:

(276) 523-4202 Extension 463 or toll free (800) 252-6362
Caring for an elderly family member can be hard work. It can be a 24 hour seven days a week job that affects employment and changes family routines. Caregiving is a stressful occupation, most often done for love instead of money. Families in Lee County have an option that is not available to most people in America. They can join a program that helps caregivers meet the needs of their loved ones safely and in their own homes.

The Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is a health plan that enables older citizens with chronic illnesses, who need help with activities of daily living to remain safely in their own residences as long as possible. Mountain Empire PACE in Big Stone Gap serves adults, aged 55 or older, who meet the following qualifications: reside in the City of Norton or in Lee, Scott or Wise Counties; are eligible for nursing facility level of care; and can live in a community setting without jeopardizing their health or safety.

PACE enrolls participants in a comprehensive program of health and social services tailored to meet each individual’s needs. Under the guidance of an interdisciplinary team, PACE enrollees receive medical, nursing, pharmacy, nutrition, recreation, rehabilitation, transportation, personal care and social services. Core services are provided in a PACE Center, a licensed adult day healthcare center where participants come for medical care, rehab therapies, counseling and recreation.

PACE covers every service covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

Enrollees in the PACE Program can participate in a variety of activities including “exercise circle” at the PACE Center in Big Stone Gap. The exercises are designed to build upper body strength, coordination and flexibility. Music, light weights and games are incorporated into the sessions. Pictured are (left to right) Eileen Roberts, Carolyn Brooks, Inez Dorton and Belinda Owens. Ms. Roberts and Ms. Owens come to the PACE Center only for adult day healthcare. Photo reprinted with permission from The Powell Valley News.

Common Questions about Mountain Empire PACE

- What is PACE? The Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly is a health and social service program that helps older people with chronic illnesses to live independently in their own homes.
- How do I qualify? You must need help with some of your activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, mobility, or toileting, as determined by professionals from the local Health Department and Department of Social Services.
- Who pays for these services? Long Term Care Medicaid and Medicare. A worker can provide help with the applications and process.
- Can I keep my home? Yes, PACE wants you to remain and live independently in your home with PACE Services or help from your family.
- Will PACE take my income from me? Long Term Care Medicaid allows you to keep your income up to $1,210 per month for a single person.
- Do I have to change doctors? No. You will see the PACE doctor, but you can also see your “old” primary care doctor up to 4 times a year. You can probably see the same specialty doctors; PACE contracts with most specialists in the area.
- Do I have to come to the PACE Center every day? No, PACE care is tailored to your needs. You may come to be social or you can come only for medical or rehab appointments. And PACE offers many services in the home.
- Will PACE pay for my medicine? Yes.
- How will I get there? MEOC Transit provides door to door transportation.
- What do I do if I get sick or need the doctor? PACE Medical Staff is on call 24 hours a day every day of the year.
- How do I start? Contact PACE Enrollment Staff at 276-523-0599 or 866-793-7223.
combined. Care is covered in a variety of settings, including the PACE Center, homes, hospitals, physician offices, dental and hearing practices, assisted living facilities and nursing homes. The PACE Center in Big Stone Gap has facilities for dining, recreation, personal care, medical care, occupational therapy and physical therapy. MEOC buses and vans deliver participants to the PACE Center and to appointments with other service providers in the region.

PACE participants often receive personal care (bathing and dressing assistance, feeding, etc.), home delivered meals, homemaker services, skilled nursing care, medication assistance, doctor visits and restorative therapies in their home.

When participants need specialty medical, dental or eye care or hearing services, PACE makes the appointments, arranges door to door transportation and coordinates the delivery of care with follow-up as needed.

According to Pam Stewart, Intake and Enrollment Coordinator, PACE began in April 2008 at a renovated facility in the MEOC office building. MEOC built a new facility for the PACE Center, which opened in December 2009. Virginia has eight PACE organizations with 14 PACE Centers. The Big Stone Gap center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Approximately 100 people are enrolled in the program with an average of 45 individuals visiting the Center each day. The service area is large with some participants traveling from long distances including Ewing, Nickelsville and Pound. Stewart said that about one third of the enrollees are from Lee County.

Stewart states that the PACE Center is designed as a one stop delivery site for medical, social and nutritional services. A typical day at the PACE Center is scheduled as follows: While at home, participants receive help as needed with bathing, dressing and breakfast. They are picked up at their home by bus drivers, who transport them to the PACE Center. At the Center they meet with other participants in a common area for coffee, snacks and conversation. Next, participants may choose “exercise circle” to build upper body strength and flexibility or read newspapers, watch television, play table games and socialize. After exercise or individual activities, lunch is provided followed in the afternoon by crafts, games or entertainment. Medical and rehab visits are woven into the schedule as needed.

Medical care is available to enrollees 24 hours a day and seven days a week. After hours care allows for a nurse on call to assess the situation and decide on follow-up care, which could be a home visit, doctor appointment or emergency care and treatment. A medical doctor or nurse practitioner is always on call to advise and assist the nurse.

The benefits to PACE participants and their family members are numerous according to Stewart. “Caregivers can go to work and not worry about leaving a family member home alone. It allows peace of mind to the family caregiver and allows elderly citizens to live independently. The after hours medical care is also a huge benefit,” states Stewart.

She added that some participants come to the PACE Center five days a week with others electing to visit two or three days a week. Participants who do not enjoy socialization may visit the Center only for medical care and rehab therapies. Some individuals come to the PACE Center only for adult day health care, without being enrolled in PACE.

Most frail elderly individuals have problems that require professional help. Some issues — decreased mobility, loneliness, memory loss, and chronic illnesses — are difficult to handle alone. Various health care and social service providers may be needed and working with multiple agencies, physicians and institutions to solve problems can be an overwhelming task.

In PACE, a professional interdisciplinary team coordinates the health care and social service needs for each participant. Each person is evaluated and the team works with them to design an individualized plan of care. Assessments are done at enrollment and reassessments are done every six months with the individual and family included in the service delivery plan. The interdisciplinary team approves all services paid for by PACE and program participants agree to use the PACE provider network when they enroll.

As a health plan, PACE assumes full risk for the cost of providing health care to participants. Everything is included — medical and nursing care, prescription medications, rehab therapies, hospitalization and long term care. PACE is financed by Medicare and Medicaid. Enrollment in PACE depends on each person’s unique situation and anyone interested should call Stewart at 523-0599. She can arrange tours upon request.

PACE is a health plan that enables older people with chronic illnesses who need help with daily living to remain in their own homes. Participants receive medical, nursing, pharmacy, nutrition, recreation, rehabilitation, transportation, personal care and social services. Activities could include rehab exercises, social time, playing table and board games, crafts and entertainment. Pictured are Norma Stapleton (left) and Neisha Tuggle. Photo reprinted with permission from The Powell Valley News.
“I’m home!” A Story of PACE Participant Patsy Jennings

Patsy Jennings used to live in a nursing home. With the help of case managers from Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc and The Junction Center for Independent Living’s Olivia Harvey, she moved back to her own house in December, 2011. The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance had a program called “Money Follows the Person” that paid for some modifications to her home, making it safe and accessible for her to live at home.

Once she was home, Ms. Jennings enrolled in PACE, received supportive services and started to work on her goal of walking six steps from her wheelchair to her favorite easy chair.

Ms. Jennings lives at home with the help of her two daughters and a MEOC personal care aide. The aide visits in the morning to help with showering, dressing and getting ready for the Mountain Empire Transit bus, which takes her to the PACE Center five days a week. In the evening, the aide helps out

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PACE Participant Advisory Committee Important in PACE Program

“Let’s get a pool table!”
“Let's go on bus rides when the seasons change!”
“Fax my medical records to the specialist during my appointment, not before I get there.”
“My three sisters want to enroll in PACE.”

These are some of the ideas that arise during Participant Advisory Committee meetings.

PACE Director Tony Lawson says, “I feel okay about comments made by participants at meetings because they’re mostly about details or minor discomforts, like brushes for craft paint or potholes in the backroads. Every once in a while, something serious comes up, but most of the time, it’s the details. Participants seem well satisfied with the services we provide.”

The Mountain Empire PACE Participant Advisory Committee includes every participant in the program. The committee meets every three months to hear reports from staff and talk about program operations. Each participant has a chance to ask questions, voice concerns and
Deborah Gardner receives "Outstanding Older Worker Award"

On September 23, 2014, Deborah Gardner of Big Stone Gap was presented the “Mae French Outstanding Older Worker Award” at the annual Older Worker Luncheon sponsored by the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) of Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC). In order to receive this award, an individual must be an employee of MEOC or a trainee in the Older Worker Program who is fifty-five years of age or older who demonstrates the important and outstanding contributions made daily by older people to improve the health and well being of our community, as Mrs. Mae French did. Mrs. French also believed strongly in church, community, family, and work and served as a mentor and role model to people of all ages. Deborah began as a trainee in the Older Worker Program through MEOC and is now a part-time employee of MEOC as an Administrative Assistant. While on the Older Worker Program, Deborah received her GED and because of that has been able to take some college classes at the local community college. Congratulations, Deborah Gardner, as the winner of the 2014 “Mae French Outstanding Older Worker!”

How Do I Get More Information About Mountain Empire PACE?

Mountain Empire PACE is a program within Mountain Empire Older Citizens that serves as a comprehensive community based long term care option for frail older adults.

Services include Home Health, Personal Care, Homemaker, Respite, Personal Alert Services, Adult Day Care, Recreation, Activities, Exercise, Socialization, Meals, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Nutrition Counseling from a Registered Dietician, as well as full medical services provided by the Medical Director, Dr. Bickley Craven, Melinda Fleenor, FNP, and clinic staff. Medical personnel are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through after hours on call services.

To qualify for PACE one must be 55 years old or over, live in Lee, Scott, or Wise Counties or the City of Norton, be eligible for nursing facility level of care (need help with multiple activities of daily living and need skilled nursing support) and be able to live safely at home or in another community setting with the help of PACE service.

PACE is a perfect fit with your family and provides invaluable assistance in helping families help their loved ones live at home.

Please contact Pam Stewart, Enrollment Coordinator or Layne Walker, Medicaid Specialist at Mountain Empire PACE, 276-523-0599 or 866-793-7223 for further information. They will explain the specific eligibility requirements, assist you in qualifying for the program and further assist you in enrolling in PACE if that is your wish and you qualify.

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until one of her daughters gets home from work.

Asked what she likes about PACE, Ms. Jennings said, “What I like most are the people. It’s a happy place. I’m happier.” She also enjoys center activities and Wii bowling. But she credits therapy with helping her in the most practical ways. She lost 39 lbs through lymphedema therapy and has exceeded her personal goals with the help of Dr. Gemma Aguirre and the PACE therapy team. Ms. Jennings said, “They know exactly how to help me.”

Ms. Jennings achieved her goal of walking six steps in April 2012, a few months after she enrolled in PACE. In November 2014 she walked 166 feet on parallel bars and in December she walked 298 feet using a walker. The last time she used a walker instead of a wheelchair was 2009, more than five years ago.

Not long ago, Ms. Jennings was hospitalized. As she came through the doors of the PACE Center, she threw her hands up in the air and said, “I’m home!”

With PACE, people can live in their own homes in their own communities and continue to participate in activities important to them.

PACE participants do not live at the PACE Center. The center is where core services are located, including the medical and rehab clinics, recreation and dietary facilities, social services and administrative offices. For information about PACE, call Pam Stewart at 276-523-0599.
make comments about the nuts and bolts of the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. Many good ideas come from these meetings as participants talk about issues important to them: food and drink choices, clinical care, exercise equipment, craft supplies, field trips, home repairs, medical specialists, and outreach to friends and family.

In the most recent committee meeting, the staff went over the results of the 2015 Participant Satisfaction Survey. The results were very positive with high marks for medical and nursing care, rehab therapies, social work, food service, transportation, home care and recreation. Staff will keep looking for new ways to meet individual preferences for food and recreation and to teach participants more about prescription medicines.

The Participant Advisory Committee is authorized to ask questions of and make recommendations to the Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. Board of Directors.

Meet The PACE Interdisciplinary Team: Making Life Better for Participants

It is very rare to find a range of medical disciplines under one roof in this day and time. At Mountain Empire PACE, an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) works together to create a tailor-made set of health services for each person who takes part in the program. This plan of care is designed to treat whatever illnesses each person already has while keeping new problems from coming up. The IDT is made up of highly qualified professionals with years of practice in their individual disciplines. The IDT includes a doctor, nurse, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, personal care aide, transportation director, activity coordinator, physical and occupational therapists and the center manager. The IDT meets each morning and arranges for all the medical and social services needed for PACE participants to live safely in the community.

PACE participants and their families work with the IDT on a common goal — to keep living safely in their homes with people they love and who love them.
Peggy Coomer, L.P.N. (left) is pictured with Nettie Ruth Collett (right).

Bobbi Potter (right) during gait training and ambulation, as part of pre-prosthetic training with Candice Wiggins, Licensed Physical Therapy Assistant.

Evelyn Neeley (left) with Sharon Foster, restorative aide (right) during ball toss activity as part of balance exercise. Mack Quillen (middle) performs exercise with nu-step machine for cardiovascular endurance training.

Joyce Rutherford (left) performing individualized exercise program with Candice Wiggins, physical therapist assistant (right).

Patsy Jennings (sitting) visits with Allison Christian, clinic aide (standing) as she waits to see the doctor.
Mountain Empire PACE opened on April 1, 2008. The program has operated for 7 years and has served 249 people from Lee, Scott, Wise and Norton. Pictured with the anniversary cake are, left to right, PACE Center Manager Donna Susong, Social Worker Kristy Lee and Activity Director Donna Mahan.

Phyllis Collins (left) pictured at the PACE Center while receiving upper extremity exercises with Beth Bell, occupational therapist (right).

Dianna Boggs enjoys exercising with the nu-step machine at the PACE Center. This is a favorite!

PACE Rehab Puts Participants Back On Their Feet!

PACE is all about enabling participants to maximize their functional independence, including assisting them whenever possible to remain safely at home. For some of our participants, the goal includes helping them achieve their personal goals for greater independence and achievement. The rehab department at PACE, consisting of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and restorative therapy work to put our participants back on their feet again, sometimes even after a long period of dependency in a wheelchair.

PACE rehab department provides full-service physical and occupational therapy practices. Our staff is trained to efficiently rehabilitate a variety of conditions such as orthopedic (fractures, after hip and knee surgery), musculoskeletal disorders (back pain, neck pain, arthritis or other pain syndrome), neurological (stroke, Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis), vestibular (dizziness, vertigo), prosthetic training following amputation, lymphedema therapy, and wellness (falls prevention program, restorative program). Our therapists evaluate and set individualized treatment programs designed to return or improve a participant’s level of functional mobility, independence, and safety.

We asked some of our participants what they can say about PACE rehab. Some of their remarks were:

“I can’t say enough about therapy. It’s wonderful. It’s the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“I went from using a walker to using a cane.” “I can go up and down the bus steps now that I used not to be able to do.”

“My favorite is doing the nu-step. It keeps me going. If I have not been going to PACE and not being on nu-step, I will just sit at home and dry up.”

“I like the rehab and all the staff. If I have a problem you are always there to help me.”

“It keeps me joyful and active.”

The rehab team considers each of our participants a star. Some have made particularly dramatic gains in independence since entering the PACE rehab program. Many others continue to remain hard at work while they press toward their goals.
Meet the PACE Medical Director Dr. Bickley Craven

Mountain Empire PACE clinic has a new medical director. Dr. Bickley Craven, MD, joined the PACE clinic team in July of 2014. With over 30 years’ experience in a broad variety of clinical settings, Dr. Craven brings a wealth of knowledge to the program. She strives to make herself familiar with the history, needs and preferences of each PACE participant in order to provide care and services to meet their chronic care needs.

Dr. Craven directs the PACE medical team which provides services both in the clinic and after hours. In addition to Dr. Craven, the clinic staff includes a Family Nurse Practitioner, a Registered Nurse and four Licensed Practical Nurses.

PACE participants have access to the PACE clinic for their routine and preventive health care needs as well as acute care services that are available on a walk in basis. A medical provider and a nurse are available on call 24 hours a day to advise and direct those in PACE should they have questions or problems when the clinic is closed.

The entire clinic staff is devoted to providing competent, compassionate care to the elderly PACE population of Southwest Virginia. Each member of the team makes it her goal to assist in keeping PACE participants living safely in their own homes for as long as possible.

Welcome Dr. Craven!
Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc.

The Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly is a health and social service program that enables older people with chronic illnesses who need help with activities of daily living to live in their own homes as long as possible.

PACE provides individualized care to meet the specific needs of participants in the program.

Available services include but are not limited to:

- Primary medical and specialty care
- Prescription medications and assistance
- Daytime schedule of small and large group activities
- Meals and dietary counseling
- Physical, occupational and speech therapies
- Transportation
- Social services, care management and counseling
- Personal care, homemaker services, and respite care
- Medical equipment and supplies
- Inpatient and outpatient hospitalization

Mountain Empire PACE serves adults 55 years of age or older who:

- Live in Norton, Lee, Scott or Wise Counties
- Are eligible for nursing facility level of care
- Can live in a community setting without jeopardizing their health or safety.

276-523-0599  Toll Free 866-793-7223

Mountain Empire PACE accepts Medicare, Medicaid and private payment. If you are entitled to Medicaid with no patient liability, you pay no premium and no out of pocket cost for this program. If you have a liability through Medicaid, it is paid monthly to Mountain Empire PACE. PACE is regulated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and is a program of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services. Mountain Empire PACE does not discriminate against potential or active participants for any reason, including race, ethnicity or national origin.
5th Annual Harold Lester Memorial Golf Tournament

Friday June 5, 2015
Lonesome Pine Country Club – Big Stone Gap, VA
8 a.m. Registration
8:30 a.m. Shotgun Start

All Proceeds to support Harold Lester Memorial Fund of the Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center of Mountain Empire Older Citizens

Sponsorships

Level 1 - $175
Four Person Team
Hole Sponsor
Name on Tournament Board

Level 2 - $400
Four Person Team
Name on Tournament Board

Level 3 - $100
Hole Sponsor
Name on Tee Box

Level 4 - $100
Individual Participant

Level 5
Donation of Any Amount
Individual Sponsor

Mulligan Package Included for All Levels

Hole-in-One Contest ● Door Prizes ● Lunch Provided

For registration or more information, please call Maggie Christian Gilbert (276) 523-4202 or email mchristian@meoc.org
Pharmacy Connect Partnership Hits $171 Million Mark After Only 14 Years

The partnership program of Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia has accessed over $171 million dollars of free medication for the region’s uninsured adults over the past fourteen years. Funding for this program comes from the Virginia General Assembly. The partners in this program are Clinch River Health Services, Inc., Junction Center for Independent Living, LENOWISCO Health District, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc., The Health Wagon, Stone Mountain Health Services, Inc., Virginia Department for the Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Virginia Health Care Foundation.

Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia serves uninsured, medically indigent adults of all ages in the counties of Lee, Wise, Scott, Dickenson, Buchanan, and Russell and the City of Norton in the far southwestern end of Virginia by providing help in accessing the free Indigent Patient Assistance Programs of over 200 national pharmaceutical companies.

This assistance is available to adults of all ages. If you or someone you know is having a difficult time purchasing prescription medications, free medications may be available for you. Medication Assistant caseworkers (MACs) are available at each of the partnership sites, to navigate a software system to see what is available for you. The software downloads a myriad of varying forms, specific to each company, along with the specific eligibility guidelines for each company.

If you are having a difficult time purchasing prescription medications, please give us a call. Remember, this service is available to people of ALL AGES. We may be able to get free medicines for you. Please ask for Bridgett McCoo or Rachel Helton if you need help. The local number to call is 276-523-4202 or the toll free number is 1-800-252-6362.

Pictured is MEOC’s Medication Assistance Caseworker Bridgett McCoo assisting a person in need with the Pharmacy Connect Program application.

The State Bureau of Insurance Offers Help and Hope

The State Corporation Commission’s Bureau of Insurance (the Bureau) assists thousands of consumers each year by responding to inquiries and complaints about services received from their health plans, insurance companies and agents. The Bureau also assists consumers in understanding and exercising their rights to appeal adverse determinations made by Managed Care Health Insurance Plans (MCHIPs) such as HMOs or PPOs and facilitates and coordinates requests for an independent external review of eligible adverse determinations made by health carriers, and in some cases, self-insure ERISA plans. The Bureau’s consumer assistance sections provide free professional information and complaint services to all Virginia consumers. Consumer Assistance Services are provided by the Life and Health/Property and Casualty Consumer Services Sections, Office of the Managed Care Ombudsman, Office of Independent External Review, and the Insurance Consumer Outreach sections. Consumers should try to resolve problems with their company or agent before contacting the Bureau. When it becomes necessary to contact the Bureau, you may call or write to: Bureau of Insurance P.O. Box 1157 Richmond, Virginia 23218-1157 or call (804) 371-9741 or 1-800-552-7945 (VA Only).
Southwest Children’s Advocacy Center Fund Raising Appeal Update: Your Help Continues to Be Needed

The fundraising appeal letter printed in its entirety below was mailed to supporters on November 21, 2014. Since that mailing, $21,000 has been donated by concerned individuals. An additional $15,000 is expected to be made available to the CAC in July due to legislative efforts of Delegate Terry Kilgore and Senator Bill Caricco in changing the state funding formula to recognize those centers statewide, including MEOC, which are nationally accredited. This totals $36,000 leaving a balance of $39,000 still needing to be raised. CAC staff have written several grant proposals which may not or may be funded. Thus, efforts remain strong at MEOC to raise an additional $39,000 one way or the other to address the continuing funding shortfall for this valuable, life saving service. The letter below gives instructions on how you can make a greatly needed and greatly appreciated donation to help keep the work of the CAC strong and alive in far southwest Virginia.

Dear Friends of Children,

We are writing to share the unfortunate and heartbreaking news with you that The Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center of Mountain Empire Older Citizens has served a record setting 549 children from January 1, 2014 through today, November 21, 2014, surpassing last year’s total of 527 children served over the full year. It seems that each edition of local and regional newspapers carries a horrific story of unfathomable abuse of one child after another or a death of a child from abuse by others. Additionally, there are literally hundreds and hundreds of children suffering abuse whose stories and situations do not become public, but who also are seen and treated daily through the services provided by the team at The Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center of Mountain Empire Older Citizens.

As the holidays approach and as we prepare to start a fresh new year, we thank you for your past support and ask once again for your financial support this coming year. It is difficult to face the darker image of children at holiday time, but the reality of hundreds of sexually, physically and emotionally abused and bruised children in our area is an image that haunts all of us and makes us soul sick. These are children who are fighting for their lives and making these children whole again is the mission and work of our Children’s Advocacy Center. The impact of the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) is long lasting, critical and encouraging. The process of making traumatized children whole again is a miracle witnessed daily by staff at CAC and by its many Multidisciplinary team partners, including Sheriffs and local law enforcement, Commonwealth’s Attorneys and health and human services providers.

Without partners and successful local fundraising campaigns, the CAC simply cannot continue to operate. Federal and state resources are insufficient to keep a CAC open and operating, plus there are always uncertainties with these sources that play havoc with the work of our CAC. Sequestration continues to reduce our budget by $75,000, government shutdowns sure don’t help and Federal and State funding levels are not increasing.

We continue to seek new funding sources and are very creative and motivated in doing that. We will continue to devote strong attention to it. Even with all our efforts to date, we have had to lay off one invaluable employee in our Children’s Services Department at a time when the sheer numbers of children that we are seeing dictates that we should be adding staff. As we did last year, we are setting our local fundraising goal at $75,000. We know that we will be receiving a donation of over $6,000 from the Wise County Sheriff’s Department which we will publicize later and we know that we have received a total of $500 from several individuals and churches so far. Thus, we have a remaining $68,500 to raise and must do that by the end of April, 2015.

The CAC is too valuable to our region’s children and grandchildren for us to lose it. In addition to treatment and intervention on behalf of our children, the CAC also emphasizes and works to prevent child abuse.

See HELP, Page 24
On March 9, staff of Mountain Empire Older Citizens was honored to host visitors from the University of Virginia Cancer Center, Charlottesville. MEOC and UVA Cancer Center have a long history of partnering to bring cancer education and services to people in far southwest Virginia. Most recently, they have partnered on Cancer Center Without Walls, an initiative which promotes a community-based support program designed to eliminate barriers to early diagnosis and treatment of cancer through training Community Health Workers, or navigators, to disseminate information and promote screenings.

Visiting were UVA Cancer Center staff members Dr. Roger Anderson, Associate Director for Population Sciences and Program Co-leader for Cancer Control and Population Health Research; Nila Saliba, Research Affiliation Administrator; and Lindsay Hauser, Health Educator. Accompanying Cancer Center staff was Emma Mitchell, Assistant Professor, UVA School of Nursing, who recently collaborated with the local cancer navigator network to submit a cancer control proposal. Also in attendance were MEOC Advisory Council President and retired Norton Department of Social Services Director Roger Ramey; Teresa Kern, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences, Penn State University; and Deborah Clarkston, Associate Professor of Nursing, Virginia Appalachian Tri-College Nursing Program, Mountain Empire Community College, representing another MEOC partnership with the community.

Visitors were treated to a presentation about all MEOC’s many programs and services as well as to a tour of all MEOC buildings and offices, including the PACE Center, the Mountain Empire Transit facility and the Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center.

Everyone left the gathering full of renewed energy, enthusiasm and new ideas committed to growing and strengthening the partnership.

Dr. Roger Anderson, Program Co-Leader for Cancer Control and Population Health Research at The University of Virginia, said after his recent visit to Southwest Virginia and tour of MEOC, “It is wonderful to have the opportunity to plan and launch new initiatives with our community partners to prevent cancer and support survivorship in Southwest Virginia. Some of these new initiatives involve our partnership with MEOC to help improve access by cancer survivors to supportive services meeting their needs for patient education, diet and exercise and preventing cancer recurrence. Another key strategic initiative is the newly expanded role of the Cancer Center Without Walls advisory board to help guide the community outreach work at the UVA Cancer Center by identifying community priorities, and working with cancer researchers as collaborators and planners. Working together is helping together. I look forward to the journey!”

Visitors from UVA Cancer Center, Charlottesville, gathered in MEOC’s conference room for a photo following their tour of MEOC facilities and introduction to MEOC programs and services. Left to right, Deborah Clarkston, Assistant Professor of Nursing, Mountain Empire Community College, and Cancer Center Without Walls Advisory Board Member; Emma Mitchell, Assistant Professor, University of Virginia School of Nursing; Lindsay Hauser, UVA Cancer Center Health Educator; Dr. Roger Anderson, Associate Director for Population Sciences and Program Co-leader for Cancer Control and Population Health Research, UVA Cancer Center; Marilyn Pace Maxwell, MEOC Executive Director Emeritus and Cancer Center Without Walls Advisory Board Co-Chair; Teresa Kern, Assistant Professor Department of Public Health Sciences, Penn State University; Nila Saliba, Research Affiliation Administrator, UVA Cancer Center; and Michael Wampler, MEOC Executive Director.
Emma Mitchell

Emma Mitchell, Assistant Professor, University of Virginia School of Nursing, shared her research interests and her vision of addressing the high rates of cervical cancer mortality in our region. MEOC is committed to working closely with Emma on this project. Her comments following the visit follow.

“Two of my areas of interest for research are cervical cancer and rural Appalachia. The two come together in a project to explore how to increase access to cervical cancer screening for women in far Southwest Virginia. I'm looking forward to working with MEOC to gather feedback from Community Navigators and focus groups in the area to ensure that the research team develops culturally appropriate and feasible interventions for prevention. Our current study will explore the cultural acceptability and feasibility of working with community navigators to use a new, simple technology that allows women to complete sample collections at home. What we find may help in efforts to identify cervical cancer early, when it can be most easily treated.”

Nila Saliba

UVa's Nila Saliba’s response to the visit to MEOC was, "Working with MEOC is always inspiring because of the range of its programming, because its love of community always shines through, and because the joy of service usually prompts a smile along the way. We’ve worked on various cancer-related projects over the years and I am grateful for the opportunity to work again with the MEOC staff to bring new resources to the people of far Southwest Virginia. Hopefully, some bright day, we'll point to lower cancer rates and know that we've helped reduce the pain and loss that cancer causes in our communities”.

Help

HELP from Page 22

We are making lifesaving changes in the lives of children who heretofore were hopeless, and, because of the work of the CAC, the number of successful prosecutions of child abuse offenders is increasing.

To make a tax deductible donation to The Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center of Mountain Empire Older Citizens, make a check payable to MEOC and mail to MEOC, P.O. Box 888, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219. Please put CAC on your check and/or envelope.

As always, you and your support are so needed and so greatly appreciated. Please share our appeal with your friends, church, civic clubs and any others you think might be supportive and helpful. Our time to raise the remaining $68,500 is limited, but with your help, we can and must be successful.

Thanking you in advance for your part in saving the Children’s Advocacy Center.

All Best Wishes,
Michael Wampler
Executive Director
Janie Dockery
Director of Children’s Services
Marilyn Pace Maxwell
Executive Director Emeritus
UNDERSTANDING CANCER IN APPALACHIA

FREE WORKSHOP

Where: Family Life Center of First Baptist Church, Jonesville, Va
When: April 30, 2015 @10:00 AM—3:00 PM

Speaker Topics Include:
- What is Cancer, Prevention, Early Detection, Treatment and Resources
- Gain tools & learn of local resources to educate others about cancer
- Become familiar with basic cancer information & effective ways to share information
- Learn of local Patient Navigation Education services

For Information Contact Maggie Christian Gilbert @ 276-523-4202, mchristian@meac.org or Rev. Mike Humfleet @ 276-346-1100/276-346-2395

Please register for workshop by April 20, 2015
Lunch will be provided
Virginia Rural Health Association Honors MEOC With Best Practices in Rural Health Award

MEOC recently was honored by the Virginia Rural Health Association (VRHA), a state-wide organization working to improve the health of rural Virginians through education, advocacy and fostering cooperative partnerships. MEOC was selected to receive its 2014 Best Practices in Rural Health Award presented at its December conference in Staunton.

This award annually recognizes a program or institution that exemplifies commitment and service to the advancement of rural health in Virginia. MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler and MEOC Executive Director Emeritus Marilyn Pace Maxwell represented MEOC at the Awards Luncheon. The award was given to MEOC for its body of work over the past 40 years in serving rural Virginians.

In presenting the award, VRHA Board Chair Laura Jones noted the following points about MEOC’s selection for this honor.

The award recognizes MEOC as an example of what a rural location can do for itself and within itself by listening to its population and responding. Founded in 1974, MEOC began by offering its first services, a home-delivered meals program to serve frail and homebound older persons and a congregate meals program to serve more active older persons. From those humble beginnings, MEOC has grown to an organization providing more than thirty different services as a result of four decades of developing community based services and transportation to support older people living at home as well as to support families as they care for their aging loved ones. Always responsive to community needs rather

See HONORS, Page 27

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Deputy Commissioner Robert Brink recently visited with MEOC as part of his across-the-state tour of Area Agencies on Aging. Also in attendance were area leaders who enjoyed the opportunity to meet with Deputy Commissioner Brink. Everyone was treated to a tour of MEOC facilities and a brief presentation about MEOC programs and services.

L to R, Stephanie Sprinkle, MEOC CFO; Tony Lawson, MEOC PACE Director; Robert “Bob” Brink, Deputy Commissioner, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services; Michael Wampler, MEOC Executive Director; Roger Ramey, President, MEOC Advisory Council; A.J. Hatmaker, MEOC Board Chairman; Donna Susong, MEOC PACE Center Manager; Shannon Scott, Wise County Administrator; Dane Poe, Lee County Administrator; Judy Miller, MEOC Director of Care Coordination; Rachel Helton, MEOC Director of Elder Rights; Mitch Elliott, MEOC Transportation Director.
than outside forces, MEOC has solicited community opinion on what was needed in southwest Virginia healthcare services and has responded by building programs that are sustainable and culturally appropriate. MEOC has also grown as a southwest Virginia employer. Beginning with one full-time employee in 1974, MEOC now employs over 300 full-time and part-time individuals.

MEOC’s mission was expanded thirteen years ago when the community asked MEOC to administer a regional Children’s Advocacy Center to serve and treat victims of child abuse. MEOC’s Mountain Laurel Cancer Support and Resource Center provides support services and patient navigation for area cancer patients and their families. In 2007, MEOC was able to move forward in developing its long held vision of a Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), an innovative model of medical and social care for frail elderly people wishing to remain living at home.

MEOC heavily fundraises for its own programs in the region, and has put more than $8 million per year into the economy of Southwest Virginia by its salaries, bricks and mortar facility, grant-writing prowess, and enablement of others to work despite cancer, care for older family members, or child care issues.

In accepting the award, both Wampler and Maxwell stressed the importance of partnerships citing the importance of collaboration in developing programs and services in southwest Virginia. “We are deeply humbled by this recognition and accept it on behalf of the Board, Advisory Council, staff and countless partners of MEOC these past 40 years. We salute the VRHA for its tireless work on behalf of the 2.5 million people who call rural Virginia their home,” said Maxwell. “Recipients of this award are known for their commitment and service to their advancement of rural health in Virginia. We are honored to be selected to be among that company of people and organizations,” concluded Wampler.

Mountain Empire Older Citizens
39th Annual Walkathon

to Benefit the Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly
Sunday, May 3rd at Union High School • Big Stone Gap
Registration will begin at 1:00 pm and the Walk will officially begin at 2:00 pm.
Please make plans to join us this year!
Debra Elliott Named Grace P. Davis Outstanding In Home and Family Support Services 2014 Employee of the Year

On Saturday, November 15, 2014, Debra Elliott of Coeburn was honored as the Grace P. Davis Outstanding In Home and Family Support Services Employee for 2014. Debra has been employed with MEOC for several years as a personal care aide. Debra truly exemplifies the qualities of loyalty, kindness and commitment in her everyday life. She is a loving mother, grandmother and great grandmother and is active in the Beverly Hills Tabernacle. She also works each year in raising money for the MEOC Emergency Fuel Fund for the Elderly.

Some quotes which were received in her nominations for the award are: “Debra is truly a special person. She treats everyone as if they are the most important person in the world.” “If everyone was like Debra Elliott, the world would be a better place.” “She treats co-workers, clients and everyone with respect and kindness.” “I want to be like her when I grow up.” “She is the very best aide my father has ever had!”

Thanks to Debra for everything she does to brighten the lives of everyone she comes in contact with.

Grace P. Davis, retired Lee County educator, was instrumental in the organization and development of Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. and provided invaluable leadership in its growth and expansion from 1974 through 1999, a twenty-five year record of service.

When Ms. Davis resigned from the MEOC Board in 1999 at age 96 for health reasons, the Board named her Chair Emeritus in recognition of her extraordinary service and leadership. On November 19, 2001, the MEOC Board of Directors voted to establish the Grace P. Davis Outstanding Family Support Services Employee Award to annually honor an MEOC employee who is an extraordinary direct care provider to older persons and who displays the qualities of compassion, concern, respect and service to frail older clients. This annual award was established to honor Ms. Davis for her decades of service and for her establishment of excellence in MEOCs family support services programs and to continue her legacy at MEOC by recognizing those employees who most demonstrate the fulfillment of her dreams of service to frail older persons by the daily display of loyalty, commitment and kindness to MEOC and those we serve.

No greater honor can be bestowed on a staff member in the Family Support Services Department than to be selected to receive the Grace P. Davis Award. Congratulations Debra Elliott on your service to older people in our region.

Previous Grace P. Davis Award Winners

The Grace P. Davis Award has been presented to an MEOC In Home and Family Support Services employee annually since 2001. Previous winners are:

2003 Inell Gilliam Duffield
2004 Barbara Collinsworth Jonesville
2005 Brenda Shearer Gate City
2006 Linda Rose Coeburn
2007 Nancy Kimberlin Jonesville
2008 Markeda Hall Norton
2009 Sandra Catron Gate City
2010 Barbara Taylor Norton
2011 Glenda James Coeburn
2012 Yvonne Stanley Appalachia
2013 Frankie McPherson Jonesville

Transit

TRANSIT from Page 27

el training as well as guidance on how to schedule trips through MEOC Transit. Once receiving support, seniors will be more confident in utilizing public transit and excited to participate in community events with neighbors, friends and family.

Mitch Elliott, Mountain Empire Transit Director, stated “this grant provides MEOC the opportunity to identify, educate and encourage seniors to utilize public transportation services to promote socialization and aging in place.”

Judy Miller, MEOC Director of Care Coordination, stated, “MEOC care coordinators are very excited to be part of this project which will empower seniors by providing greater awareness of and access to public transportation. In their work as options counselors provid-
Wise County Law Enforcement and Prosecutors Support Children’s Advocacy Center

On Friday, November 21, 2014 the Wise County Sheriff’s Office (WCSO), Virginia State Police (VSP), and the Wise County/Norton Commonwealth’s Attorney’s (CWA) Office presented a check to the Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center in the amount of $6130.67 in memory of Emma Baldwin. Emma was a young child who died as a result of child abuse injuries in Wise County. Funds were collected in order to purchase a grave marker for Emma. The WCSO decided that any excess contributions would be donated to the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC).

The CAC provides services to child victims of abuse and their families. The center is a child-friendly space where children can comfortably work through emotional responses to the trauma of abuse. A specially trained interviewer conducts the forensic interview as part of the investigation process. On site, trauma-focused, mental health treatment is provided at no cost to the child victim or their family by a licensed clinical social worker. A multidisciplinary team approach is utilized in order to reduce trauma to the child victim and to allow team members to coordinate the response to meet the families’ needs. The CAC remains involved with the child and family throughout the investigation, prosecution and treatment as long as needed.

The CAC is a program of the Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC), Children’s Services Department located in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. The Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center would like to thank the community and all those involved for their help and support.

Pictured left to right: Lt. Russell Cyphers, Janie Dockery, Michael Wampler, Assistant CWA Adrian Collins, Jennifer Davis, Sheriff Ronnie Oakes, VSP Special Agent Jason Nichols

April Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

The pinwheel serves as the national symbol for child abuse prevention. It is a reflection of hope, health and safety — what we desire for children throughout Virginia and everywhere.

Pinwheels for Prevention is a nation-wide public awareness campaign that puts a new spin on prevention. The campaign uses community activities and public policies to prioritize prevention right from the start, making sure child abuse and neglect never occur.

The pinwheel — an uplifting symbol of childhood — represents our efforts to ensure the healthy development of children, while recognizing that child development is a building block for community and economic development. When children don’t have equal opportunities for growth and development, we put the future of our society at risk. A focus on innovative programming that lays the foundation for children’s safety, growth and development reduces the possibility of more serious problems occurring later. When we invest in healthy child development, we are investing in community and economic development.

The pinwheel is our primary vehicle for conveying that prevention works! It is not used to represent children who have been abused or who have died as a result of abuse or neglect. The Blue Ribbon — a signature national symbol which was launched in Virginia- is still used to represent children who have been harmed.

MEOC Children’s Services: Healthy Families, Children’s Advocacy Center, KinCare and the Foster Grandparent Program encourage everyone in our region to participate in Child Abuse Prevention Month during April!
Senator Carrico and Delegate Kilgore Bring Great News to Pharmacy Connect

Over the past 14 years of its operation, Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia has been of immense assistance to low-income, working people without insurance and without the means to purchase life saving and life prolonging prescription medications. Over $171 million dollars worth of free prescriptions have been accessed through the Pharmacy Connect Program for people of all ages in Southwest Virginia.

Thus, it was disastrous news to tens of thousands of people and their families when it was learned that funding for this program had been eliminated from Virginia’s budget. MEOC and its partners are so greatly relieved to report that both Senator Bill Carrico and Delegate Terry Kilgore led successful efforts during the last session of the Virginia General Assembly to restore this critical funding.

On recent visits to MEOC, both Senator Carrico and Delegate Kilgore met with MEOC staff and discussed the importance of the Pharmacy Connect Program to the community. Both Senator Carrico and Delegate Kilgore sponsored budget amendments in the Senate and in the House of Representatives respectively to fully restore the program’s funding and spearheaded efforts that resulted in the full Senate and House supporting their efforts. “It is so obvious that both Senator Carrico and Delegate Kilgore made saving the Pharmacy Connect Program a top legislative priority and we are deeply thankful that they were successful in their extraordinary efforts,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler speaking on behalf of MEOC and the Pharmacy Connect partnership. Both have been long time advocates for Pharmacy Connect supporting it since their elections to the Virginia General Assembly.

There was obvious joy all around as demonstrated in the photos.

Pictured left to right are: Rachel Helton, MEOC Director of Elder Rights, Bridgett McCoo, MEOC Pharmacy Connect Case Manager, Michael Wampler, MEOC Executive Director, Delegate Terry Kilgore, Judy Miller, MEOC Director of Care Coordination and Stephanie Sprinkle, MEOC Chief Financial Office.

(Left) CAC staff welcoming Senator Carrico, left to right: CAC/Children’s Services Director Janie Dockery, MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler, CAC Clinical Director LaDonna Hall, Senator Bill Carrico, Family Advocate/KinCare Director Patty Roberts and Resident in Counseling/Forensic Interviewer Jennifer Davis.
Senator Bill Carrico and Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) Director Janie Dockery discuss needs and concerns of the center on a recent visit by Senator Carrico to Mountain Empire Older Citizens. During the last session of the Virginia General Assembly Senator Carrico was instrumental in securing budget language changes that allow accredited CACs throughout Virginia to continue to grow and to serve the children of Virginia. MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler thanked Senator Carrico for his leadership in ensuring that the critical services of the CAC will be available to children who suffer abuse, neglect and victimization. A more equitable way of distributing funding will result in the CAC being able to carry on its important work.

Elder Rights Director Rachel Helton (left) demonstrates Pharmacy Connect software to Senator Bill Carrico while Pharmacy Connect Coordinator Bridgett McCoo looks on. Senator Carrico was enjoying a tour of MEOC facilities and introduction to MEOC programs and services. Senator Carrico, along with Delegate Terry Kilgore, led a successful effort during the last session of the Virginia General Assembly to restore critical funding to Pharmacy Connect, a program that over the past 14 years of operation has provided immeasurable assistance to low-income, working people without insurance and without means to purchase medicines prescribed by their doctors. “We are so grateful to Senator Carrico for his work on behalf of southwest Virginians to ensure that this valuable program remains available to them,” said MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler.

Grant

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The Ladders of Opportunity program officially began on January 1, 2015 and ends on May 31, 2015. MEOC Transit expects an increase in transit ridership as individuals receive outreach services and education, but more importantly, seniors will have the tools needed to access transportation and other resources in the community.

Please call 276.523.RIDE (7433) or toll-free 1.888.877.6748 for more information or to make a reservation. A 24-hour notice is required for reservations.
Delegate Terry Kilgore Visits Children’s Advocacy Center at MEOC

Delegate Terry Kilgore, a long time supporter of The Southwest Virginian Children’s Advocacy Center of MEOC, recently visited with staff at the Center to discuss the last session of the Virginia General Assembly and to get their thoughts and ideas on legislative issues of concern for the next session.

MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler thanked Delegate Kilgore for his leadership during the last session in co-sponsoring a budget language change that allows for the continued growth of accredited CACs like MEOC’s in Virginia and provides a more equitable and objective method of funding. More objective funding criteria will result in increased funding to the Southwest Virginia Children’s Advocacy Center and other nationally accredited centers in Virginia. CAC staff had furnished information to Delegate Kilgore on the issue prior to the session. The resulting change in funding for our CAC was an important part of local ongoing fundraising to bring financial stability to the important work of the CAC. All were smiles over the legislative change!

Delegate Kilgore and MEOC staff are pictured in a multi-purpose room of the CAC which serves as a waiting area for forensic interviews and as a therapy room as well. Sitting are LaDonna Hall, CAC Clinical Director, Janie Dockery, Children’s Services Director. Standing left to right are Patty Roberts, Family Advocate/Kincare Director, MEOC Executive Director Michael Wampler, Delegate Terry Kilgore and Jennifer Davis, Resident in Counseling and Forensic Interviewer.