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HAN AND LEARN GROUPS HELP ADVANCE ASA'S STRATEGIC PLAN

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Each of the American Society on Aging's (ASA) eight constituent groups bring together professionals in the field of aging with particular interests through targeted newsletters, conference sessions, Web pages and more. In the last issue of **Agging Today**, we profiled the Business Forum on Aging and the Forum on Religion, Spirituality and Aging.

In this issue, we highlight two constituent groups that are working to promote key initiatives that advance ASA's 2005–2010 strategic plan. ASA has long been a leader in research, practice and policy linkages, due in large part to the network of healthcare professionals from a variety of service settings who comprise a large number of ASA members. Despite 30 years of effort, healthcare providers are still searching for optimum models to apply in integrating preventive, acute and long-term care and for a favorable public-policy environment. ASA seeks to be the leader in integrating research, practice and policy to address issues in aging in an increasingly diverse society—and ASA's constituent groups will play a key role in this task.

ASA also seeks to reflect a strengths-based approach to aging in its publications, member services and leadership-development activities. Strengths-based approaches affirm what older adults have to offer in improving quality of life for themselves and their communities. Critical to this approach are fostering opportunities for creative aging, lifelong learning, civic engagement and the pursuit of deeper meaning through religion or spirituality. In coming issues of the "ASA Update" column, I will continue to focus on activities of ASA constituent groups in advancing ASA's strategic plan.

HAN

The Healthcare and Aging Network (HAN) is a professional community of individuals and organizations working to promote innovative, high-quality approaches to meeting the healthcare needs of older adults. The network facilitates information exchange and collaboration among policymakers, researchers and service providers. HAN members are interested in a variety of issues affecting diverse populations, including managing high-risk populations of older adults; coordinating care across the continuum of home, community and institutional settings; promoting maximum health and functional independence for elders; and strengthening consumer involvement in healthcare. With nearly 1,500 members, HAN continues to be the largest constituent group within ASA.

HAN's quarterly newsletter, *Healthcare and Aging*, provides leading-edge information about the special health needs of older adults, as well as identifying and promoting best practices. Recent issues of the newsletter included a focus on health disparities and chronic conditions (spring 2005) and on culture, health and aging (summer 2005). Future issues will examine innovative programs on caring for family caregivers (fall 2005) and concerns about palliative and end-of-life care (winter 2006). In addition, HAN members re-

ceive the monthly e-newsletter *HealthWord*, which provides education and resources to help professionals in the field of aging improve health promotion and disease prevention efforts aimed at older adults.

In collaboration with Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative, HAN sponsors the annual Healthcare and Aging Awards program. This year, more than 30 projects have been nominated for offering innovative approaches that enhance functioning and health-related quality of life for older adults. Up to six programs will be selected to receive a \$2,500 cash award and will be honored at the 2006 Joint Conference of ASA and the National Council on the Aging in Anaheim, March 16–19.

INTEGRATING CARE

Also planned for the Joint Conference is the HAN special program “Integration and Long-Term Care: Where Are We? Where Are We Going?” This daylong program, sponsored by SCAN Health Plan, will address the need for seamless integration of health and social services to help older adults and others with disabilities.

The Joint Conference special program includes a morning symposium featuring examples of successful public and private initiatives. Participants can also choose from three afternoon workshops on innovative approaches to public policy, management or community collaboration. The program will end with a workshop on visions for long-term care in the coming decade.

Another special program to be offered by HAN at the 2006 Joint Conference is “Medicines and Aging Core Curriculum.” The sessions in this program are designed to educate professionals in the field of aging about the practical aspects of medication use among the older population. Nonmedical and nursing professionals who work with older adults in their homes, community-based and institutional settings rarely have formal training in geriatric pharmacotherapy. With an understanding of the basic principles and guidelines related to safe and effective drug therapy, professionals in aging will be able to identify people at risk for medication problems and play a greater role in improving health-related outcomes for older adults.

For more information on HAN activities, visit www.asaging.org/han.

LEARN

Now in its second decade, the Lifetime Education and Renewal Network (LEARN) provides updates on program models, how adults learn, public-policy issues, new research, funding sources and training opportunities. LEARN members, who represent the growing variety of settings and programs offering opportunities to lifelong learners, are involved in all aspects of education for older adults. Among the wide array of older-adult education settings today are universities and colleges, senior centers, and adult-education programs in local school systems and recreation departments. Programs range from those at hospitals and other healthcare settings offering classes in health promotion and hospital wellness to community locations giving sessions in the creative arts, music and the humanities.

Through its quarterly newsletter, *The Older LEARNer*, members of LEARN connect with peers and exchange ideas. Last summer, LEARN produced a joint newsletter with the Forum on Religion, Spirituality and Aging. Future issues of *The Older LEARNer* will focus on learning and the aging brain (fall 2005); policy, advocacy and civic engagement (winter 2006); and a report on the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (spring 2006).

MIND ALERT

LEARN members also sponsor the annual ASA-MetLife Foundation MindAlert Award, established to recognize innovations in mental-fitness programs for older adults. More than 50 programs have been nominated for the award this year, including activities, products and tools to promote cognitive fitness later in life. In addition to cash awards, the MindAlert program includes a trainers bureau that provides experts to programs in selected locations. In the past year, 15 locations hosted the MindAlert presentation by trainers bureau members, who addressed cognitive vitality and best practices that can be adapted to local settings. A new round of proposals for trainers bureau host sites will begin in January 2006.

Also, LEARN’s MindAlert program presents a special lecture at the Joint Conference that is later published as a MindAlert monograph.

LEARN will also sponsor a special symposium at the 2006 Joint Conference titled “Investing in Lifelong Learning: Is There a Conflict Between Virtue and Profit?” A panel will explore the pendulum swing from grant-funded programs presented at no cost to underserved communities, to fee-based programs catering to increasingly affluent, well-educated people who may not identify with issues in aging.

LEARN activities are excellent examples of ASA’s commitment to strengths-based approaches to aging. For more information on LEARN activities, visit www.asaging.org/learn. ❖

HOW TO JOIN

ASA members receive membership in one constituent group free and can add others for a small additional fee. If you are a member and do not belong to one of these groups, you can learn more about the valuable resources of this membership benefit. Even if you have selected one, we encourage you to tap into the networks of other groups. To learn more about constituent group activities, visit www.asaging.org/join. To find articles and abstracts from previous constituent-group newsletters, click on www.asaging.org/articlesearch.

ASA GROUPS

Business Forum on Aging ([BFA](#))

Forum on Religion Spirituality and Aging ([FORSA](#))

Healthcare and Aging Network ([HAN](#))

Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network ([LGAIN](#))

Lifetime Education and Renewal Network ([LEARN](#))

Mental Health and Aging Network ([MHAN](#))

Network on Environments, Services and Technologies for Maximizing Independence ([NEST](#))

Network of Multicultural Aging
([NOMA](#)) ❖