

**HEALTHWORD**  
Putting Health Promotion in Motion

August 2004

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's Live Well, Live Long project, funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Live Well, Live Long provides education and resources to professionals in the field of aging to help them improve health promotion and disease prevention efforts aimed at older adults. Current and past issues of this newsletter are available on the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc>.

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**FEATURE:**

**ASA RELEASES NEW HEALTH PROMOTION CURRICULUM FOR OLDER DRIVERS**

A new curriculum developed by the American Society on Aging trains older adults that their health is connected to their ability to drive -- and improvements in diet, exercise, and self-care may help them continue driving.

The curriculum effort began in March 2003, when ASA staff conducted three focus groups around the country on public health issues related to safety and driving fitness for older drivers. Organizers gathered representatives of community-based programs serving older adults, as well as local transportation providers, clergy, departments of motor vehicles, law enforcement, and health departments.

The groups were asked to comment on their role as community resources on older driver safety: Who was asking them about older driver safety and how did they respond? Facilitators also queried participants about gaps in the information they were asked to provide and the formats in which they would like to receive information on crash prevention and driving safety in order to improve their ability to respond to older adults and their families. Virtually all participants described their organizations as reactive rather than proactive on conducting prevention and education efforts.

These three focus groups helped ASA develop content for an older-driver safety course, which was then presented at four pilot test sites in October and November 2003.

Developed as a complement to driving refresher courses offered by AARP and the AAA Foundation, the curriculum for this six-hour course provided lay instructors with background information about age-related changes in vision, flexibility, reaction time, strength, and cognition. In the pilot workshops, the instructors taught older adult participants adaptations they could make to their driving habits to decrease their risk for accidents. In addition, instructors were encouraged to use the workshop to help older drivers begin talking to their families about whether they should stop driving -- and encourage elected officials to develop alternative forms of transportation in their community.

The pilot workshops attracted more than 100 older men and women seeking to improve their driving longevity by increasing their physical activity, changing their diet, engaging in mental exercise, managing their medications, and engaging in good driving practices.

Final testing of the curriculum ended in February 2004, and ASA recently posted the refined curriculum on the Live Well, Live Long website -- at no charge. For more information, visit <http://www.asaging.org/cdc> or contact program manager Nancy Ceridwyn at [nancyc@asaging.org](mailto:nancyc@asaging.org).

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**BEST PRACTICES:  
OLDER CALIFORNIAN TRAFFIC SAFETY TASK FORCE**

In early 2003 the California Highway Patrol joined with the Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice to found the Older Californian Traffic Safety (OCTS) Task Force. The OCTS Task Force is charged with reducing crash deaths and injuries among elders. Encouraging self-regulation among older drivers is one goal. So is teaching families, friends, and members of the community how they can help elders recognize when driving behavior becomes unsafe.

Bringing together representatives of aging-services, healthcare, transportation, and law enforcement agencies, the Task Force is guiding the development of several efforts to assist elders with driving-safety decisions so that they do not have to make these decisions alone:

\* To help older drivers extend their safe driving years and take control of their mobility future, the task force's Aging Work Group has developed a self-awareness questionnaire,

“Taking Control of Your Driving Future.” To download a copy, visit <http://www.eldersafety.org>.

\* On October 25, 2004, the Task Force, in partnership with the American Society on Aging, will offer a “Road to Driving Wellness” class at a number of sites across California. Using the curriculum described in the article above, the half-day class makes the point that maintaining good health will very often extend the driving years. The Aging Work Group will introduce its self-assessment tool at these training sessions. Visit <http://www.asaging.org/cdc> for more information.

The OCTS Task Force has also joined with a number of other organizations to support community-wide efforts to improve older driver safety:

\* The American Medical Association recently developed guidelines for doctors on how to help patients understand the relationship between physical or mental disorders and driving capacity (to download a copy, visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/9117.html>). the Task Force is developing streamlined definitions of the guidelines to encourage doctors to use them.

\* The California Department of Motor Vehicles has nearly completed a research project to develop a more perceptive licensing exam. If adopted, the test would be given to all in-person applicants for license renewals, including those ages 70 and older. The Task Force is partnering with the DMV to assure broad understanding of what the exam means and what it should achieve if adopted.

For more information on the Task Force, please contact Patti Yanochko, project coordinator at the Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice, at [pyanochko@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:pyanochko@projects.sdsu.edu).

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**AT THE FOREFRONT:  
TASK FORCE CHAIR CELEBRATES ITS ACHIEVEMENTS**

By California Highway Patrol Commissioner D. O. (Spike) Helmick

Now that the Older Californian Traffic Safety (OCTS) Task Force has been in existence for 18 months, a couple of things impress me about older drivers. First, the independence and flexibility provided by a personal vehicle are valued as much by older people as by those of any age. So we have an obligation to help older adults retain that advantage for as long as they can safely operate a vehicle.

Second, for a great many older people, the day will come when they should stop driving. Making that transition will -- at the very best -- be difficult. So we have the additional responsibility to guide people through that painful period with wise counsel and caring assistance.

Older drivers make news when a catastrophic collision occurs. One such event happened in Santa Monica more than a year ago, when an 86-year-old man accidentally drove into

a crowded farmers market, killing ten. The rarity of these severe crashes should emphasize the fact that the majority of older people make appropriate adjustments in their driving to minimize the impact of changes in vision, reaction time, and flexibility.

One of the objectives of our task force is the encouragement of self-regulation. But equally important will be our message to families and friends of older people: Be vigilant -- you can help a loved one recognize when driving behavior becomes truly unsafe and rehabilitation or cessation must take place.

The OCTS Task Force is one-and-a-half years old -- still an infant, really. But we have made a good start and anticipate a great deal of progress in coming years.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Web Seminar Series: Caregiving Awareness Through Resources and Education for Professionals

Sponsor: American Society on Aging

Next month, ASA is presenting two Web seminars on caregiving issues:

Policy Trends to Support Family Caregivers: A Web-Hosted Chat

Facilitators: Robyn Golden, Gail Hunt, and Kathy Kelly

Date: September 14, 2004, 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time

Family Caregiving Web Seminar: Current Challenges for a Time-Honored Practice

Presenters: Helene Ebenstein, Kathy Kelly, and Carol Levine

Date: September 21, 2004, 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time

Continuing education credit for both seminars is available. To learn more about the two seminars or to register online, visit <http://www.asaging.org/webseminars>.

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Event: North American Conference on Elderly Mobility: Best Practices from Around the World

Dates: September 12-15, 2004

Location: Detroit

This conference will focus on best practices for improving elder mobility in the areas of roadway design, screening and assessment, education and training, housing and land use, alternative transportation, and automotive safety. For more information, visit <http://www.tiami.org> or contact Diane Drago at (517) 663-5147 or [DMSdiane@concentric.net](mailto:DMSdiane@concentric.net).

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Event: A Meeting of Minds: Mental Health & Mental Illness in Later Life  
Sponsor: Ithaca College Gerontology Institute  
Date: September 23, 2004  
Location: Ithaca, N.Y.

At "A Meeting of Minds," experts will present focused workshops throughout the day on depression, suicide, and substance abuse; housing for mentally ill elders; pharmaceutical treatments; nursing home staff training needs; the impact of physical health on mental health; maintaining mental health; and hoarding behavior. For more information, call (607) 274-1967 or e-mail [aging@ithaca.edu](mailto:aging@ithaca.edu). After August 30, visit the conference website at <http://www.ithaca.edu/agingconference>.

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Event: Toward a New Perspective: From Ageing to Ageing Well, International Conference  
Dates: October 3-5, 2004  
Location: Montreal, Quebec

The International Conference 'Toward a New Perspective: From Ageing to Ageing Well' is an opportunity to effect change. Bringing together experts to stimulate discussion and exchange will serve to develop a new knowledge-base, generate original recommendations and create a unique vision to influence policy and the orientation of services. For more information, please visit <http://geronto-conf2004.netedit.info/site/>.

Have an event related to health promotion and aging that you would like to tell your colleagues about? Please submit your event, call for papers, or grant announcements to Nancy Bui at [nbui@asaging.org](mailto:nbui@asaging.org). Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

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**SURVEY DRAWING WINNERS**

Congratulations to recent winner of the Live Well, Live Long survey drawing!

April 2004: Dawn Lea

Winners were picked randomly from the list of people who participated in the Live Well, Live Long online survey. For your chance to win a one-year membership in the American Society on Aging or subscription to one of our nationally renowned publications, sign on to the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc>. By completing the quick, five-question survey on the site, you will automatically be entered into our monthly drawing -- visit the website for the list of prizes. Your answers will help program administrators evaluate the effectiveness of Live Well, Live Long and guide us in improving the health promotion resources we produce.

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HEALTHWORD is published monthly by the American Society on Aging through a grant provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Subscription is free of charge, and you are welcome to forward this newsletter to interested colleagues.

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SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS. For more information or comments about the newsletter, please contact Nancy Ceridwyn, Director of Special Projects at ASA, at [nancyc@asaging.org](mailto:nancyc@asaging.org).

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