

**Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
Area Agency on Aging
Focus Area Coordination
Area Agency Plan on Aging 2010-2013**

Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
66 Wendell Avenue
Pittsfield MA 01201
Phone: 413-499-0524
Toll free in Berkshire County: 1-800-544-5242
website: www.esbci.org

Table of Contents

A. Agency Overview	Page
Planning and Service Area Map	3
Area Agency on Aging Profile	4
B. Administration on Aging (AoA) Focus Areas	
1. Title VI Native Americans/Title III Coordination	6
2. Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection	7
3. Disaster Preparedness	10
4. Faith-based Initiatives	10
5. Health Care System Coordination	11
C. Elder Affairs Focus Areas	
1. Rural Elder Populations, including Transportation	14
2. Healthy Aging	17
3. Aging and Disability Resource Consortium	19
4. Workforce Development	19
Summary	20
Attachments	
Attachment A	Berkshire Senior Newspaper Special Heat and Eat Information Supplement
Attachment B	Berkshire Senior TV Schedule and list of topics
Attachment C	Outreach Activities



**Elder Services
of
Berkshire County, Inc.**

**Planning and
Service Area**

**Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
Area Agency on Aging/Aging Services Access Point**

**66 Wendell Avenue
Pittsfield, MA 01201**

**1-800-544-5242
FAX: 413-442-6443
TTY: 413-499-9764**

**Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.
Planning Document for
2010 – 2013 Area Plan on Aging**

A. Area Agency on Aging Profile

The mission of Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc. (ESBC) is to provide Berkshire seniors the opportunity to live with dignity, independence, and self-determination, and to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

Established in 1974, ESBC has been the federally designated Area Agency on Aging for Berkshire County since 1975 and the state designated Aging Services Access Point since 1997.

As the county's Area Agency on Aging, Elder Services provides the link between the Berkshire Planning and Service Area (PSA) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the State Unit on Aging. As the Area Agency on Aging for all of Berkshire County, ESBC takes a leadership role in identifying the needs of the county's older persons and facilitates the development and assessment of responsive services to meet those needs.

ESBC offers the following Title III programs: Volunteer Services, Caregiver Support, Information and Referral, Long Term Care Ombudsman, the Berkshire Senior newspaper, Berkshire Senior TV, Congregate and Home Delivered Meals, and Title III Subgrants. The agency also provides the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) through Title V.

Berkshire County, the western-most geographic region of Massachusetts, is bordered by three states: on the north by Vermont, on the west by New York, on the south by Connecticut, and on the east by the counties of Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden.

Berkshire County represents a region well-defined by the physical feature of mountains running along the western and eastern borders, geographic sub-region relationships, historic traditions, and internal social and economic interdependence.

Berkshire County encompasses 946 square miles and is comprised of thirty-two cities and towns. The county is rural in nature, with only 8% of land developed for residential purposes, and over 80% of that development being single-family homes.

Berkshire County is often defined according to its three sub-regions, known as North, Central and South Berkshire. While tied together economically, socially, and politically, the regions do experience some degree of independence from one another, primarily due to the 50-mile length of the county from north to south.

ESBC works closely with the county's 32 Councils on Aging and actively collaborates with the Berkshire aging services network to develop a comprehensive system of services for seniors.

According to the 2000 US Census, Berkshire County was home to 135,000 individuals, more than 30,000 of whom were 60 or older. Although the county's overall population decreased by 3.2% from 1990 to 2000, the number of Berkshire County residents age 75 or older grew by 16.5%.

Seniors age 60 or older represented 22.4% of the county's total population. According to the 2000 census, Berkshire County's percentage of seniors (age 60 or older) was significantly higher than the statewide average of 17.3%, and was the second highest percentage in Massachusetts.

According to 2007 US Census data Berkshire County's senior population (age 65 or older) continues to be the second highest percentage in the Commonwealth.

The typical senior served in our Home Care and Meals on Wheels programs is between the ages 75 and 90, female, widowed, living alone, and on a limited income. As the number of individuals age 75 and older continues to grow, so will their need for community based services.

ESBC currently has more than 130 full and part time staff - and over 400 volunteers, who provide almost 30,000 volunteer hours a year - who together serve more than 10,000 Berkshire elders, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers annually.

ESBC is committed to effective leadership and responsiveness in providing for the needs of elders. The Area Agency on Aging Plan for 2010-2013 will help identify a framework for providing services under the Older Americans Act by observing trends, elder needs, and the projected growth of the aging population in the years ahead, and by appropriately addressing the needs of the focus areas identified by the Administration on Aging, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, and Elder Services of Berkshire County.

ESBC's Programs & Services

ESBC offers a range of programs and services for seniors, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities.

In Home Services

Adaptive Equipment
Case Management
Chore Service
Companionship
Elder Care Advice Program
Elder Care Fund
Enhanced Elder Intervention
Grocery Shopping
Homemaking- Personal Care
Laundry Service
Meals on Wheels
Money Management Assistance
Personal Care Assistance Program
Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)
Private Pay Care Management
Protective Services
Respite Care
Transportation
Volunteer Services

Information Access

Berkshire Senior Newspaper
Berkshire Senior TV
Educational Forums
Information and Referral
Gallagher Alzheimer's Resource Center

Community Services

Adult Day Health
Caregiver Support Services
COA Caregiver Support Fund
Congregate Meal Sites
Educational Programs
Long Term Care Ombudsman
Men's Discussion Group
Nursing Home Screenings
Older Americans Act – Title III Subgrants
Senior Community Service Employment Program
SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders)
Supportive Day Programs
Adult Family Care
Congregate Housing
Group Adult Foster Care
Nursing Home Screening
Residential Service Coordination
Service Enriched Housing at Crossway Village (Lee)
Supportive Housing at Providence Court (Pittsfield)

B. Administration on Aging (AoA) Focus Areas

The Administration on Aging has identified five focus areas, which ESBC is already addressing as appropriate and will continue to address in the following ways:

1. Title VI - Native Americans/Title III Coordination

ESBC does not currently receive Title VI funding for the purpose of serving Native American populations within our planning and services area. According to 2007 US Census data Berkshire County's combined American Indian and Native Alaskan population is .2% - less than a quarter of one percent. ESBC will continue to provide information and outreach, and promote service access throughout the county for the purposes of engaging with and informing Native American elders and all Berkshire

County seniors to the availability of services and assistance under the Older Americans act.

2. Title VII - Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection

a.) Protective Services: ESBC's Protective Services Program serves any person over the age of 60, regardless of income, whose situation is determined to meet established program criteria. ESBC's Protective staff investigates allegations of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, caretaker neglect and self-neglect. A variety of interventions can be used to alleviate situations of abuse, from assisting with legal intervention and relocation to putting in place in-home supports to help reduce stress and provide some level of monitoring. The goal is to always work within the elder's desire and ability to change his or her situation in an effort to improve their quality of life.

ESBC's Protective Services department networks with community agencies, as well as with civic and faith-based groups to provide information regarding elder abuse issues on an ongoing basis. The ESBC Protective Services Department has forged strong and effective relationships with local police, fire, and health departments, and with the Berkshire County District Attorney's office in an effort to best serve Berkshire seniors. Joint presentations on issues of elder abuse have been conducted with the Berkshire County District Attorney's Office. The District Attorney also writes articles for ESBC's monthly newspaper, Berkshire Senior, and appears on BSTV, our local public access TV show. In addition, ESBC conducts regular Protective Services presentations with the direct care staff of in-home provider agencies such as the local VNAs, who are most likely to be in a position to first observe the signs and symptoms of elder abuse and neglect.

Another way ESBC helps protect vulnerable seniors from scams and exploitation is by having ESBC Protective Services staff participate in Triad programs throughout the county. The Triad program unites three primary groups interested in senior safety: law enforcement, senior services organizations, and senior citizens. Through the cooperation of the Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, local police and fire departments, senior service agencies including ESBC and the Councils on Aging, and seniors themselves, the Triad program addresses crime prevention and safety issues faced by our growing senior population. The program also serves to open a better line of communication between seniors and public safety agencies.

b.) Enhanced Elder Intervention: ESBC offers this unique program to enhance the Protective Services safety net. The Enhanced Elder Intervention Program, which is supported entirely by local funding, including support from the Berkshire and Northern Berkshire United Ways, the Williamstown Community Chest, and the City of Pittsfield, works with persons age 60 and older who are having difficulty meeting their needs in the community but do not fit the eligibility criteria for Protective Services. They may be individuals who are beginning to show initial signs of dementia or are having difficulty coordinating and managing their household finances due to physical or cognitive changes. The Elder Intervention Specialists are able to link these elders to the services they need before a situation escalates into a crisis.

c.) Money Management: The goal of the ESBC Money Management Program is to assist seniors who are at risk of losing their independence due to difficulties with managing their household finances. The Money Management Program helps to provide peace of mind to those we serve. In the past 13 years, ESBC's Money Management volunteers have assisted hundreds of Berkshire County residents with sorting mail, paying bills, budgeting, bank reconciliation and much more.

d.) Long Term Care Ombudsman: ESBC Ombudsman volunteers visit each of the county's 15 nursing homes and one rest home at least once a week – in most cases we visit twice a week – to ensure residents' rights are being upheld, to monitor the general condition of the facilities, and to help solve problems. This past year, Ombudsman volunteers made more than 1,200 visits to Berkshire County nursing and rest homes, making 83,150 resident contacts.

e.) Meals on Wheels: ESBC's Nutrition/Meals on Wheels (MOWs) program covers all 946 square miles of Berkshire County – going anywhere and everywhere homebound seniors need hot, nutritious weekday meals. To better ensure quality and to optimize service, ESBC operates its own kitchen. This past year our Lanesboro kitchen prepared more than a quarter-million meals, and our MOWs drivers once again traveled more than 226,000 miles. The Meals on Wheels program also provides a well-being check for the frail, homebound seniors we serve, many of whom live alone in rural, remote areas. In many cases the MOWs driver may be the only face-to-face contact a senior will have that day. On numerous occasions, drivers have encountered seniors in need of immediate medical or other assistance and have been able to summon help. At the 15 senior dining centers located throughout the county, including one kosher lunch site operated by the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, volunteers and staff help make seniors feel comfortable and welcome as they enjoy both the meal and the social interaction.

f.) SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders): ESBC SHINE volunteers help explain the basics of the Medicare health insurance program, the State's Prescription Advantage Program, coverage gaps, supplemental insurance, and prescription drug coverage options. In addition, the SHINE program assists seniors in accessing public benefits like MassHealth, fuel assistance, low-income prescription drug subsidies and programs that pay for Medicare Part B premiums.

g.) Community Services: ESBC volunteer drivers transport seniors to medical appointments, wait with them, and then transport them back to their homes. Berkshire seniors, who no longer drive or are temporarily unable to drive benefit tremendously from this medical transportation service. ESBC volunteer shoppers shop for groceries with a list prepared by a senior, or transport and assist the senior as he or she does their own shopping. ESBC companion volunteers visit those who are isolated and homebound. They may socialize, read aloud or engage in other activities such as doing crafts, playing cards or working on puzzles. Other Community Services volunteers help produce our Berkshire Senior TV show or help distribute our Berkshire Senior newspaper.

h.) Berkshire Senior and Berkshire Senior TV: For many homebound seniors, our Berkshire Senior newspaper and Berkshire Senior TV are primary sources of information on issues important to their well-being.

ESBC's Berkshire Senior newspaper has a monthly circulation of 10,500, including over 4,000 subscribers. Each month our Meals on Wheels drivers hand-deliver the newspaper to all homebound seniors who receive home-delivered meals. In addition, Berkshire Senior is dropped off at more than 125 locations throughout the county. Berkshire Senior is a reliable source of information for seniors and the community at large. The paper's monthly articles include those written by federal, state, and local government officials who focus on legislation, the state and federal budgets, and funding for senior services; health issues (including cancer, hip replacement surgery, stroke, cardiac problems, macular degeneration, and Alzheimer's disease); as well as nutritional, caregiver, Social Security, Medicare, MassHealth, and Consumer Protection information. A copy of Berkshire Senior's Special Heat and Eat Information Supplement, published in the Fall of 2008, is included as Attachment A.

Each August through June, ESBC tapes monthly shows for Berkshire Senior TV (BSTV), which are aired on local public access channels throughout the county. Topics this past year included fuel and food assistance, senior advocacy, consumer protection, tax preparation assistance, veteran's benefits, fire safety, Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and health insurance information. A list of topics of the BSTV tapings for the last 18 months, and the local community access cable television schedules for BSTV, are included as Attachment B.

i.) Legal Assistance: Through a Title III Subgrant with Western Massachusetts Legal Services (WMLS), seniors are able to access the "Elder Law Project," which provides low-income and socially needy elders with free legal representation, advice, referral and community education. The subgrant particularly focuses on providing legal support to seniors who have no other means of access to the legal system, who need protective interventions, or who present legal problems, the resolution of which will assure the maintenance of their independence. This past year, WMLS and ESBC co-sponsored a one-day conference called "When the Golden Years aren't so Golden" which provided helpful information on scams, bankruptcy, dealing with consumer debt, and avoiding foreclosure.

j.) Caregiver Support: ESBC supports caregivers of frail, vulnerable elders in the following ways: One-on-one counseling, support groups, workshops, respite, caregiver expo, Gallagher Alzheimer's Resource Center, Title III subgrants, Caregiver Support Fund, Council on Aging Caregiver Support Fund, and information disseminated through Berkshire Senior newspaper and television.

With regard to vulnerable elders, ESBC will continue to provide a vital safety net of programs and services. and to raise community awareness of their needs and challenges, while also seeking to continue to identify additional ways to enhance the services and options available to them.

3. Disaster Preparedness

A strong community network is critical when faced with a disaster. ESBC is continuously building collaborative relationships with community partners particularly the Councils on Aging. ESBC is a member of the Berkshire County Emergency Food and Shelter Program, the Northern Berkshire Pandemic Planning Group and the Emergency Planning Group of the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association. ESBC has an established Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in place, which outlines policies and lines of communication to insure that essential functions of the agency remain operational after an event such as a pandemic or natural disaster. In addition, ESBC maintains a list of agency clients that would be particularly vulnerable in the event of a disaster due to circumstances such as physical or cognitive limitations, isolation from family, and other informal supports, or a significantly remote location. This list would be distributed to the appropriate community emergency response teams in the event of a disaster.

More directly, ESBC assists seniors with emergency needs through a number of emergency funds - Elder Care Fund, Emergency Fuel Assistance Fund, Little Necessities Fund - which have been used to provide, among other things, fuel assistance, emergency temporary shelter and emergency medications. Any senior in Berkshire County, with a demonstrated need, can apply to these funds for assistance.

ESBC's Meals on Wheels program not only provides a week-day meal, but also a well-being check for home-bound seniors many of whom live alone in rural, remote areas. In many cases the Meals on Wheels driver may be the only face-to-face contact the senior will have that day. On numerous occasions, the Meals on Wheels drivers have encountered seniors in the midst of their own personal disasters and have summoned help. Each fall, ESBC distributes shelf stable meals to each Meals on Wheels client who needs them so that in the event the agency is unable to prepare or deliver meals due to weather or other circumstances, our clients have back up meals available. Throughout the year, the shelf stable meals are available to Protective Service clients should there be the need. ESBC has a contingency plan in place should our Lanesboro kitchen become inoperable and unable to prepare meals.

ESBC's Berkshire Senior newspaper (circulation 10,500) provides articles and information on health and safety topics on a regular basis. Such topics have included falls prevention, safe driving techniques, how to beat the heat and void dehydration, and winter safety. The October 2008 edition of Berkshire Senior included a pullout "Special Heat and Eat Information Supplement" which identified community resources for fuel assistance programs and various food assistance programs such as the Brown Bag and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly know as the Food Stamp Program. See Attachment "A".

4. Faith Based Initiatives

ESBC supports two important Faith Based Initiatives for seniors to enhance nutrition services in Berkshire County – kosher meals and weekend home-delivered meals.

For over 20 years, The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires has served meals through its Older Adult Kosher Hot Meal Program – they now serve three days a week for a total of 6,300 meals each year. The Jewish Federation serves 30 congregational meals and 12 home-delivered meals on each of their 3 weekly service days. ESBC provides Title III funding, Nutritionist oversight and monitoring, supplies that are suitable for kosher usage and mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers. In addition, ESBC provides kosher meal home delivery to those individuals who live in rural areas of the county in which Federation drivers cannot deliver.

Since 2003, ESBC has been collaborating with Take and Eat, Inc, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The effort began with a church in North Adams when a group of volunteers led by a recently ordained deacon, Frank Ryan, committed to support frail elders by providing home-delivered holiday and weekend meals. On their first holiday of operation, 79 meals were provided to those who had no family members to visit them – without respect to religious affiliation. ESBC played a role by informing our Meals on Wheels clients about the service, letting the program coordinators know who was interested in receiving meals, initially conducting CORI checks on volunteers (subsequently taken over by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts) and providing guidance on the steps to establish proper food safety and sanitation. This weekend meal program now serves 22,000 meals annually to north and central county seniors involving ten church organizations of different denominations. In addition to the hard work and dedication by many volunteers in this endeavor, we estimate that the monetary contribution of ESBC for food services supplies such as meal trays, cups, and paper bags is over \$2,000 each year. Deacon Ryan is a member of ESBC's Advisory Council.

ESBC regularly receives donations from various religious organizations throughout the county. We also provide information about our programs and services that get posted in their church and synagogue bulletins. Last fall, several churches requested copies of the Heat and Eat Supplement to Berkshire Senior and made them available to their parishioners.

5. Health Care System Coordination

ESBC coordinates with area doctors, hospitals, nursing homes, Visiting Nurse Associations (VNAs), home health agencies and Hospice organizations to provide long term community based services. ESBC has contracts with all of Berkshire County's VNAs for skilled nursing, home health aide, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. ESBC's nursing department has regular participation in discharge planning for the county's 15 nursing homes through the CSSM process. ESBC has a Case Manager located part time at Berkshire Medical Center, the county's largest hospital in the role as Hospital Liaison where she works with patients and the hospital discharge planners to develop discharge plans that include the appropriate community supports. ESBC is represented on the following boards, committees and groups: The Berkshire Alzheimer's Partnership, AHEC Nurse Task Force, the HIV/AIDS Advisory Group, the Community Health Network Agencies

(CHNA), Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, VNA & Hospice of Northern Berkshire Professional Advisory Committee, Hillcrest Commons Nursing Facility Ethics Committee, HospiceCare in the Berkshires' Professional Advisory Committee and the Community Health Program's Health Caravan.

Through the Title III subgrant process, ESBC has funded the following programs that promote health and coordinate with community health care partners:

1. In-home health risk assessment and consultation about Alzheimer's Disease by an area Nurse Practitioner.
2. Telephone medication reminders through Berkshire Community Action Council, the local LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program).
3. In-home foot care by a certified foot care nurse.
4. Assistive technology assessments and devices through United Cerebral Palsy.
5. Caregiver Education Series with the Alzheimer's Association.
6. One time in-home skilled nursing visits by a local VNA.
7. Health risk screenings for seniors in rural Southern Berkshire County by the Community Health Program.
8. In-home respite care for caregivers of individuals effected by Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders through a local home health agency.

This past spring, ESBC helped sponsor a Caregiver Expo, which brought together nearly 100 caregivers and 30 community providers for an evening of information and networking. ESBC also co-sponsored a countywide Heat and Eat Expo in conjunction with Department of transitional Assistance and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

We maintain the Richard and Rita Gallagher Alzheimer's Resource Center – a lending library with books, DVDs, and free literature about Alzheimer's Disease and other caregiver and senior issues that is utilized by area health professionals and family caregivers.

ESBC will continue to meet the needs of persons seeking assistance with benefits, applications, and information & referral services by providing health insurance benefits counseling through SHINE-trained counselors. Also, ESBC's SHINE program offers a Health Benefits University, designed for health services professionals, in Pittsfield and at Community Health Programs in Great Barrington.

Nearly 40 professionals from the Berkshire County aging network gathered at ESBC in February 2009 to learn about important changes in the Food Stamp Program, which has changed its name to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or "SNAP" program.

The Berkshire Senior newspaper publishes health-related articles monthly, including articles by local physicians on subjects such as preventing gum disease, cancer, hip replacement surgery, stroke, cardiac problems, macular degeneration, MRSA, doctor/patient partnership tips, common foot problems, knee and back surgery and cataracts. Berkshire Senior TV also provides programming on health-related topics.

Throughout 2009, ESBC has been working with the Massachusetts Association of Older Americans to provide training opportunities for Berkshire County health care and human service professionals around issues of aging and mental health. ESBC's Director of Client Services has facilitated the Mental Health and Aging Certificate Program through Boston University's Institute of Geriatric Social Work. In addition, ESBC was a co-sponsor to a day-long conference on aging and mental health which drew over 100 area professionals.

Client Statistics: The following client statistics help demonstrate the agency's commitment to assisting seniors, caregivers, and individuals with disabilities to live with dignity and independence:

Information and Referral Contacts - Annual	6,220
Elders served by Home Care Program - Monthly	1,113
State Home Care	851
Enhanced Community Options Program	134
Choices	128
Medicaid Recipients screened for Services - Annual	1,150
Nursing Facility	646
Personal Emergency Response System	284
Waiver	199
Adult Day Health	21
Elders receiving Volunteer assistance - Annual	5,438
Protective Programs (PS, EEI, and After Hours) - Annual	450
Caregiver services and support – Annual	1,035
Title 3 Subgrant recipients - Annual	310
Long Term Ombudsman - Annual	
Facility Visits	1,237
Resident Contacts	83,150
Interventions	274
Nutrition Program Meals - Annual	260,088
MOWs delivered	214,804
Congregate Meals served	45,284
Miles traveled by MOW drivers:	226,000
Outreach	
Berkshire Senior TV – Times Aired Monthly, County-wide	50+
Berkshire Senior Newspaper – Monthly, Countywide	10,500
Senior Employment Aides - Annual	34
Supportive Housing, GAFC, AFC and PCA - Monthly	175

C. Elder Affairs Focus Areas

EOEA has asked each AAA to identify four focus areas. ESBC has identified the following four focus areas: 1. Rural Elder Populations, 2. Healthy Aging, 3. Aging and Disability Resource Consortium, and 4. Workforce Development.

1. Rural Elder Populations (including transportation needs and services)

Berkshire County is a wonderful place to live. The county represents a region well-defined by the physical feature of mountains running along the western and eastern borders, geographic sub-region relationships, historic traditions, and internal social and economic interdependence.

Perhaps the single most important defining characteristic of Berkshire County, with regard to countywide service delivery is its rural nature. Berkshire County is comprised of 32 cities and towns within 946 square miles - much of it open spaces and country roads. The county stretches 50 miles from north to south. There are three main population centers: North Adams in North County, Pittsfield in Central County, and Great Barrington in South County. The other towns range in population from 138 to 8,371. Twenty towns have less than 2,000 residents. Here is how the towns in Berkshire County towns break down into sub-regions.

<u>North</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>South</u>
Adams	Becket	Alford
Cheshire	Dalton	Egremont
Clarksburg	Hinsdale	Great Barrington
Florida	Lanesborough	Lee
Hancock*	Peru	Lenox
New Ashford	Pittsfield	Monterey
North Adams	Richmond	Mount Washington
Savoy	Washington	New Marlborough
Williamstown	Windsor	Otis
		Sandisfield
		Sheffield
		Stockbridge
		Tyringham
		West Stockbridge

* Hancock may occasionally be referred to as part of Central Berkshire.

The service delivery challenges presented by distance and a rural population are significant. Communication and transportation are vital. As a countywide agency, ESBC provides a seamless network of services and programs to meet the needs of Berkshire seniors and caregivers while simultaneously collaborating and communicating with partner agencies throughout the county.

Community collaborations and outreach are key elements used in communicating the programs and services that are available to seniors throughout Berkshire County. ESBC works closely with the county's 32 Councils on Aging and actively collaborates

with the Berkshire aging services network to develop a comprehensive system of services for seniors, and to share information and resources.

One example of Elder Services' countywide collaboration is the composition of ESBC's Advisory Council, which, in addition to community members, includes representatives from many Berkshire human services and other organizations. Members of our Advisory Council are affiliated with: the Brien Center for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, AdLib, Inc. (the Independent Living Center for Berkshire County,) Berkshire Community Action Council (countywide LIHEAP - Low Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program), the Berkshire County Sheriff's office, Triad, the Berkshire County District Attorney's office, United Cerebral Palsy, the senior learning program OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Berkshire Community College) and the veterans' organization, Soldier On. The state and federal legislators' offices represented on ESBC's Advisory Council include U.S. Congressman John Olver, State Senator Benjamin Downing, and State Representative Christopher Speranzo. Four members represent Councils on Aging: Dalton, Sheffield, Windsor, and Becket. Through collaboration, we extend each organization's eyes and ears by sharing information and best practices.

With regard to outreach and the need to share information countywide, ESBC's monthly newspaper, the Berkshire Senior, and monthly television show, Berkshire Senior TV continue to disseminate important information countywide on a monthly basis. The Berkshire Senior newspaper and Berkshire Senior TV are extremely important sources of information For many homebound seniors and their caregivers.

ESBC's Berkshire Senior newspaper has a monthly circulation of 10,500, including over 4,000 subscribers. Each month our Meals on Wheels drivers hand-deliver the newspaper to all homebound seniors who receive home-delivered meals. In addition, Berkshire Senior is dropped off at more than 125 locations throughout the county. Berkshire Senior is a reliable source of information for seniors and the community at large. The paper's monthly articles include those written by federal, state, and local government officials who focus on legislation, the state and federal budgets, and funding for senior services. Other monthly articles provide important information on health issues, nutrition, caregiver concerns, Social Security, Medicare, MassHealth, and Consumer Protection.

Each August through June, ESBC tapes monthly shows for Berkshire Senior TV (BSTV), which are aired on local public access channels throughout the county. Topics this past year included fuel and food assistance, advocacy, consumer protection, tax preparation assistance, veteran's benefits, fire safety, Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and health insurance information. A list of topics of the BSTV tapings for the last 18 months, and the current schedules for the local community access cable TV stations who air Berkshire Senior TV shows, are included as Attachment B.

In addition to the Berkshire Senior newspaper and TV show, ESBC utilizes many other methods of outreach to inform individuals and organizations about the programs and services available to those age 60 and older, and their caregivers. We present to

organizations, clubs or groups, long-term care facilities, area hospitals, senior and service clubs, places of employment, caregiver discussion groups, Councils on Aging, and senior centers and senior housing facilities. We also set up information booths at various venues, including community health events. We take full advantage of any and all education and training opportunities. We help sponsor a Caregiver Expo as a way to present information to caregivers on resources available to them. Media outreach is accomplished through press releases, public service announcements, Berkshire Senior TV, *Berkshire Senior* newspaper, Councils on Aging newsletters and through our website, www.esbci.org.

ESBC staff participate on community boards, councils, coalitions, and partnerships with other human service agencies and organizations, providing and receiving information on opportunities and resources available to elders. ESBC's Caregiver program provides a unique opportunity to reach individuals via their caregivers and is particularly effective in accessing individuals with the greatest social needs, often those affected by Alzheimer's Disease and related disorders. Elder Services' Gallagher Alzheimer's Resource Center provides information on Alzheimer's disease, other senior issues, and the challenges faced by caregivers to anyone in the county who chooses to visit the center. See Attachment C for more information on ESBC's outreach activities.

Transportation continues to be a concern for many Berkshire County seniors, particularly those who do not drive, or do not live directly on a Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) bus line. Most of the available transportation services have only enough volunteers or staff to bring seniors to medical appointments or grocery shopping. There are many other types of transportation needs for which there is no apparent solution, such as visiting someone in a nursing home, going to senior centers for lunch or activities, getting to a food pantry, shopping for anything other than food, or running any one of a number of essential personal errands that those who have readily available transportation take for granted.

ESBC has transportation volunteers who take seniors to and from medical appointments and help with grocery shopping. The demand for these services often exceeds the supply of volunteer drivers, particularly in the more rural areas. When lack of driver availability prevents us from transporting a senior, we maximize our ability to provide rides to seniors by drawing upon all other available resources. ESBC contracts with the Adams, North Adams, Pittsfield and Williamstown Councils on Aging to provide van transportation for seniors. We also partner with many of the other COAs who have their own individual contracts with the Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority to provide van transportation. The COA vans primarily take seniors to and from Adult Day Health, grocery shopping, and medical appointments.

We also partner with The Retired Senior Volunteer program, which operates a van in Pittsfield that runs 4 days a week. The American Red Cross provides van transportation to medical appointments outside Berkshire County, and the Berkshire Medical Center now has a van to bring renal dialysis patients to the hospital and back. The American Cancer Society receives referrals from ESBC's volunteer transportation coordinator to provide rides to chemotherapy and oncology visits. ESBC contracts

with several of Pittsfield's cabulance and taxi companies to provide necessary rides that can't otherwise be provided.

ESBC also has a contract with the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corp. (SBETC), which serves the towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey, Great Barrington, Mt. Washington, Sandisfield, Sheffield and Otis.

The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority sells discounted taxi and cabulance tickets, as well as bus passes to eligible seniors. We are pleased that the BRTA is examining the possibility of creating more local routes with smaller mini-buses.

Another way we address the rural nature of our service area is to maintain 39 Meals on Wheels routes. Our drivers travel over 226,000 miles a year to all points in Berkshire County to be sure that any senior who needs a hot, nutritious home-delivered meal can receive one.

ESBC's Meals on Wheels program provides not only a hot meal, but also a wellness check. In many cases the interaction the senior has with the driver is the only face-to-face contact a senior has that day. If something seems amiss with the senior, or if he or she fails to answer the door, the driver reports this to Nutrition program staff, who swing into action to make sure everything is all right. Emergency contacts are notified, and the safety protocol continues until the senior has been located, and/or emergency assistance provided.

Rural seniors benefit nutritionally and emotionally from being a part of the Nutrition program – for many, it means the difference between being able to remain in their own homes or having to move to a more restrictive, institutional setting. They are healthier, and feel stronger and more secure, knowing that they are not alone, and they are not forgotten.

2. Healthy Aging

ESBC is committed to the promotion of healthy aging and disease prevention. There are a variety of factors that influence the course of the aging process, including self-care, nutrition, physical activity, living conditions, genetics, and one's available support network. In our monthly newspaper, Berkshire Senior, we publish many articles promoting healthy lifestyle choices, including healthy eating, exercise, controlling cholesterol, and staying hydrated, as well as information on insomnia, Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ) disorder, and age-related macular degeneration, among other topics. Berkshire Senior's medical feature, "The Doctor's In," taps the knowledge of our area's specialist physicians, such as oncologists, pulmonologists, endocrinologists, ophthalmologists, and renal specialists. They share with Berkshire Senior readers the latest in prevention and cure for some of the common physical conditions and medical challenges faced by seniors.

Adequate nutrition is a critical factor in maintaining good health and wellness as well as a contributing factor in improving health status and restoring well-being.

Some factors that impede adequate nutrition for seniors include lack of income, under-utilization of food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), limited assistance in obtaining groceries, health crises effecting stamina and safety, or clinical depression, resulting in decreased interest to prepare food, eat, or seek assistance.

ESBC's Nutrition Program disseminates nutritional information to seniors who need it by having drivers hand-deliver the Berkshire Senior newspaper and other pertinent community information to Meals on Wheels recipients. Providing information directly to seniors at home and thus indirectly to family members and caregivers, creates better informed consumers.

ESBC offers consultations with our Registered Dietitian (nutritionist), who assesses the dietary needs of frail, homebound adults who may have an altered nutritional status.

ESBC provides home-delivered meals to eligible seniors Monday through Friday excluding weekends, holidays, and emergency closures. Types of meals include – Hot Noontime Meals, Cold Supper Meals, Frozen Meals (delivered on Fridays) and Emergency Shelf-Stable Meals. The Congregate Meals Program provides a hot, nutritious noontime meal to any senior in Berkshire County who is able to attend one of ESBC's lunch sites across the county. Seniors who take advantage of these group meals are introduced to a host of healthy living choices at their local senior centers, which often offer health screenings, osteoporosis exercise groups, line-dancing, socialization through games and crafts, and informational lectures on promoting good health.

At various events and in our literature racks, ESBC provides informational brochures on a variety of health-related topics including diabetes and your feet, reducing the risk of stroke, prostate cancer screening and a fall prevention checklist. ESBC supports many health promotion programs through Title III funds, including health risk assessments, one time in-home RN visits, assistive technology assessments, in-home foot care and education programs.

The generation of adults born between 1946 and 1964, known as the Baby Boomers, represents a significant demographic in United States. It is anticipated that many aging boomers may be generally healthier than their predecessors due to their having taken a more active role in maintaining their health through lifestyle choices.

From a planning perspective, ESBC continues to promote the development of systems for accessing information about what supports healthy aging. ESBC's website, www.esbci.org, will continue to provide access to aging resources to a generation which is increasingly utilizing the Internet for information.

ESBC will continue to promote healthy aging activities utilizing current strategies, and will explore new opportunities to promote health aging in the years to come.

3. Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC)

In the fall of 2008, ESBC worked with AdLib, Inc., Berkshire County's Independent Living Center, to form the Berkshire County Aging and Disability Resource Consortium (ADRC). The purpose of the ADRC is to develop a coordinated system of information sharing and access to long-term services and supports for individuals, family members and providers, regardless of age, disability or income. This collaborative effort will help create a "no wrong door approach" for seniors and individuals with disabilities in need of services and information. ESBC looks forward to the ADRC partnership as a way to improve our collective ability to provide information, counseling and community-based service options that can help delay and/or avoid nursing home placement. The Executive Director of AdLib is a member of ESBC's Advisory Council.

4. Workforce Development

Elder Services of Berkshire County serves as a regional sponsor of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which is federally-funded through Title V of the Older Americans Act, and administered through the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs. SCSEP assists seniors by providing job training, job matching and job placement. The program provides those age 55 and over, who have limited finances and a desire to succeed, with the opportunity to overcome the biggest barrier to employment – lack of experience and training.

After an initial assessment of financial eligibility and job skills an applicant can be offered an assignment as a Senior Aide for up to one year with a participating community non-profit organization (referred to as a Host Agency) to gain valuable on-the-job work experience. If the individual can benefit from additional on-the-job training an additional assignment with another host agency can be arranged.

- Enrollees benefit from training, counseling, and community service assignments at non-profit organizations in their communities, prior to transitioning into the private sector.
- Participants are placed at eligible training sites for which they are paid minimum wage for 20 hours per week.

SCSEP Program Objectives:

- Gain valuable new skills and enhance the abilities of enrollees.
- Increase enrollees' opportunities to obtain jobs in the private sector.
- Change stereotypes about individuals 55 and older through public education and demonstrated success.
- Assist enrollees with developing job search skills.
- Resume development assistance.
- Enrollment in One Stop systems, which provide valuable job counseling, job search, training and resume assistance.
- Referral to support services as needed.

Program Qualifications:

- Be 55 years of age or older and a resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Annual family income must not be more than 125% of the established federal poverty income guidelines.
- In addition to income eligibility we prioritize placement for veterans and those with disabilities and other handicaps.

Seniors are made aware of the program through articles in the Berkshire Senior newspaper, programs on Berkshire Senior TV, by the Councils on Aging, and through community outreach presentations.

We hope that the SCSEP program can continue to grow to meet the needs of the older worker.

In 2003, ESBC and the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board (BCREB) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to provide increased focus on the needs of the older worker. BerkshireWorks Career Center provides office space one day a week for ESBC's Job Developer to meet with older workers in need of assistance, make referrals to the SCSEP program, and periodically offer seminars to older workers, such as *Discrimination in the Workplace*.

Also in 2003, ESBC's Director of Community Services was appointed by the Pittsfield mayor to serve on the board of directors of BCREB. This has been a significant opportunity to provide leadership for workforce development in Berkshire County by facilitating the development of and access to education, training and employment opportunities designed to meet the needs of the region's employers and diverse workforce. The Board develops policies, allocates resources, oversees programs, and serves as a broker between business and education/training providers. The Board's membership is representative of the Berkshire economy, including mostly small and medium sized businesses and a variety of employment sectors.

As a result of this collaboration we have been instrumental in having the mayors of Pittsfield and North Adams issue mayoral proclamations each September recognizing and honoring the accomplishments of older workers during *National Worker Workers Week*.

Summary

ESBC has been supporting and serving the community since 1974. Our staff and volunteers work in partnership with communities, and with health care and social service organizations throughout Berkshire county to serve more than 10,000 seniors, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers a year.

This past year, more than 400 ESBC volunteers contributed almost 30,000 hours of support and service to Berkshire seniors.

ESBC's staff is a group of extremely dedicated individuals - some work directly with Berkshire seniors - others provide essential administrative, supervisory, fiscal, and clerical support. Together they ensure that ESBC stays true to its mission to provide Berkshire seniors the opportunity to live with dignity, independence and self-determination, and to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

In many cases, the ESBC volunteer, Meals on Wheels driver, or staff member may be the only face-to-face contact a senior has that day. These one-to-one connections are the most important of all - because these connections are the ones that let homebound Berkshire seniors know that they are not alone and they are not forgotten.

As we go forward, Elder Services of Berkshire County will continue to offer services to seniors who need help, providing them with an array of options and choices. We will advocate for the needs of seniors and inform the community of our presence, and of the help we can offer. We will stay connected with each of the 32 towns and cities of Berkshire County. As the Berkshire population ages, ESBC will continue to assess the needs of older residents, and develop creative and responsive approaches to meet those needs.