

North Carolina



Senior Tar Heel Legislature

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chapel Hill, NC – The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature (NCSTHL) met in Chapel Hill June 9-10 for its second meeting of 2015. During the meeting, the 98 delegates, and alternates present heard updates regarding funding for aging programs and services. In addition, the group received information and statistics about elder abuse and awareness.

Ms. Suzanne Merrill, Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services reported on legislative updates and implementation activities. The North Carolina House of Representatives passed a budget proposal for FY 2015-16, including vital programs for older adults. We were pleased to learn that the House has restored \$967,000 for the Home and Community Care Block Grant Funding. The Senate is completing its proposal, which does not include restoration of the \$967,000 for the HCCBG. Merrill highlighted the creation of the North Carolina Alzheimer's Strategic Plan scheduled for completion by February 2016 and the White House Conference on Aging being held on July 13, 2015.

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month. Caroline Farmer of the NC Department of Justice spoke about elder abuse and ways to keep yourself safe online. All North Carolinians can freeze their credit reports on line by going to: <http://www.ncdoj.gov> and clicking on "Protect Yourself." This site has other information on scams and suggestions to protect you and your family. This site is well worth bookmarking and visiting on a regular basis.

Nancy Warren of the NC Adult Protective Services explained that "self-neglect" is part of elder abuse. Last year 25,000 reports were filed and more than half of those investigated, were cases of self-neglect. She informed the group about "Burt's Law," Senate bill 445 NC Chapter 101A-506 which protects group home residents from sexual abuse, mental health or substance abuse issues which became law in May 2015.

Melanie Bunn, a Dementia Training Specialist with Alzheimer's of NC, provided ways to help caregiver's and loved ones effectively manage the condition. She provided excellent guidance regarding how to relate to and meet the needs of persons making the journey through the physical, emotional, intellectual, and relational maze of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of Dementia. According to Bunn, Alzheimer's disease is the sixth most frequent cause of death in the United States.

Van Braxton, SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance and Information Program) Director, shared the organizations vision of assisting North Carolinians "make informed, educated decisions about

Health Care." They field approximately 3,500 calls per month and during peak months for renewal, the call center is handling up to 10,000 calls. SHIP is always looking for more volunteers.

The STHL 2014-15 legislative priorities are: 1) Preserve or Restore Optional Medicaid Services; 2) Maintain funding for senior centers; 3) Strengthen and fund North Carolina's Adult Protective Services Program; 4) Notify Medicare Patients Admitted for Observation.; 5) Home and Community Care Block Grant Funding. A more detailed explanation of these priorities are available on the STHL website.

The STHL promotes citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the General Assembly and assesses the legislative needs of older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly. Please feel free to contact your local delegate or your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). You can also visit the STHL website: www.ncsthl.org as well as our [Facebook](#) page. The next STHL meeting will be October, 8-9 2015 in Raleigh.