

# WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

# INSIDE LINE

SEPT/OCT 2006

## STAY WARM PA WITH WEATHERIZATION TIPS

*by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging*

Rising energy costs affect every Pennsylvanian and adopting some simple conservation practices can stretch your energy dollars to reduce the amount of energy you use and lower the cost of monthly utility bills. Many older adults live in older homes and that is why it is important to improve the energy efficiency of your home through weatherization and conservation efforts.

According to the Department of Environmental Protection, weatherizing your home can help to reduce energy bills from 10 to 50 percent. The DEP recommends these tips to improve energy efficiency at home:

- Inspect your home and seal any cracks or openings around windows, doors, fireplaces, pipes, electrical outlets and bathroom, kitchen or clothes dryer vents.
- If you own an older home, adding storm doors and windows can reduce heat loss by up to 50 percent.

- Purchase plastic window covering kits or interior storm window kits.
- Add insulation to your attic as well as any walls and floors that are adjacent to an unheated space such as a garage.
- Have your furnace or heating unit serviced to ensure it is working safely and efficiently. Replace furnace filters regularly.
- Set your thermostat at 68 degrees.
- Open draperies on sunny days, close them at night and on cloudy days.
- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, which are more energy-efficient and last longer than traditional light bulbs.
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 115 degrees F.
- Turn off electric appliances when not in use.

Administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the Pennsylvania Weatherization Program works to make homes more energy efficient. Targeted to low-income, elderly or handicapped residents, the program offers

services such as modification or replacement of heating systems, taking steps to reduce air leakage, installing attic insulation and educating consumers about conservation methods. For more information, contact the Weatherization Program of Westmoreland County at 724-832-9460 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For older homeowners who do not qualify for government or utility-sponsored weatherization programs, another option is to hire a dependable local contractor to perform any needed work. Federal tax credits are available for residential improvements. A personal federal tax credit of up to \$500 will be available for certain energy improvements made to principal residences before the end of 2008. A 10 percent credit can be taken for expenditures on items such as roofs, doors, windows, and insulation, and a 100 percent credit can be applied to expenditures on certain heat pumps, furnaces, boilers, air conditioning units, and air circulatory fans. A separate

new personal tax credit may be claimed against 30 percent of expenditures for qualifying solar water heating equipment, photo voltaic properties, and fuel-cell property. Restrictions apply to all the credits. Details are available through the Internal Revenue Service website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

For more information about Governor Rendall's Stay Warm PA initiative, visit the Governor's website at [www.governor.state.pa.us](http://www.governor.state.pa.us). To learn about assistance programs, weatherization resources and energy conservation ideas, visit [www.staywarmpa.com](http://www.staywarmpa.com).

### **TIME TO CHANGE**

"Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery", a national home fire safety campaign by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and Energizer Batteries urges Americans to change smoke detector batteries when they change clocks back each fall.

Basic fire safety measures can reduce thousands of needless deaths and injuries caused each year by home fires. Smoke detector maintenance is one of the simplest, most effective ways to achieve this goal. Yet about one third of all smoke detectors do not work because of worn or missing batteries.

On the time change weekend, use the "extra" hour to change your smoke detector batteries and take some other fire safety measures such as checking the smoke detector itself by pushing the test button, change your flashlight batteries, install and test fire extinguishers

and plan "two ways out" and practice those escape routes.

### **GET YOUR FLU SHOT**

Each winter, millions of people suffer from fever, aches and pains caused by the flu, a highly contagious infection. A relatively mild disease in healthy young and middle-aged people, flu can be life threatening to older adults.

One of the best ways to prevent flu is to get a flu shot each fall. Getting the shot every year is important because the flu virus is slightly different each year. Despite the shot being effective and covered by Medicare, many older Americans do not get a yearly flu shot. Many worry about safety, but in most people, the flu shot doesn't cause any side effects. A few have some soreness or redness on the arm where the shot is given.

Flu shot clinics will be held at community senior centers this fall. You must be a Westmoreland County resident age 60 or older to receive the inoculation, and there is a fee for the vaccine. If you have Medicare, please bring your insurance cards to the clinic. The cost of the inoculation will be billed to your insurance.

Pre-registration is required. Participants with any pre-existing health conditions should consult their primary care physician prior to receiving the shot. The following partial schedule was available at printing time. Please contact your local senior center for further information.

New Kensington  
Thursday, November 2, 2006  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon  
724-335-8597

East Vandergrift  
Friday, October 20, 2006  
9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
724-568-2692

Avonmore  
Thursday, October 26, 2006  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
724-697-4014

McKenna	724-837-8832
Jeannette	724-527-3200
Herminie	724-446-3282
Monessen	724-684-6105
West Newton	724-872-4976
Mt. Pleasant	724-547-4593
Latrobe	724-539-0237
N Alexandria	724-668-7055
New Florence	724-235-2800
Laughlinton	724-238-7942

### **TRANSPORTATION NEWS**

The Byers Taxi Service is now the new senior transportation provider for residents of New Kensington, Arnold and Lower Burrell. They will also continue to provide service to Vandergrift residents. To register with Byers Taxi and schedule trips, call 724-567-5664.

### **STAY SAFE WITH YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS**

Do you know that about half of prescriptions are taken incorrectly? This is due to several factors such as doctor's handwriting not able to be deciphered, different dosage schedules can be confusing, and not being able to read and understand the drug information pamphlets which may increase your potential for adverse drug reactions.

The National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) believes that better communication is the key to solving this problem.

Any person taking a prescription medication should do the following steps:

1. Prepare a health journal – include prescription medications you’re taking with dosages, supplements, vitamins and your medical history.

2. Ask your doctor questions – about medication side effects and interactions with other drugs in your health journal.

Inquire about dosing instructions, and if it needs to be taken with food and frequency of medication. If you can’t read your doctor’s writing, ask him to spell out the drug name or request a computer printout. Discuss any change in symptoms since you’ve been on the drug. You may need to be taken off, given a smaller or larger dose, or put on a different medication altogether.

3. Talk to your pharmacist – show him your health journal so he can update your records.

Clear up any additional questions about directions, side effects or possible interactions. Effective June 2006, the FDA implemented new regulations requiring package inserts to be clearer and more concise. These regulations will be phased in gradually starting with new approved drugs, and older drugs will convert formats over time.

4. At home – general forgetfulness is a top reason people don’t take drugs properly. So set up a method for yourself whether it being a “days of the week” medication container or a post-it note to

remind yourself. Don’t store meds in the bathroom due to the heat and humidity destroying their effectiveness. Store at room temperature. Finish the full course prescribed and toss out expired pills. For more information on how to use medicines safely, contact your physician, pharmacist and/or nurse for consultation.

### **CHOLESTEROL CHECK**

Nearly one third of Americans have unhealthy cholesterol levels. Fact is, your body needs cholesterol since the fatty substance plays a vital role in forming cell membranes and certain hormones. But cholesterol doesn’t dissolve in blood, and any excess builds up as plaque on artery walls, cutting off circulation to the heart and increasing the risk of heart disease.

You should have your cholesterol tested now and every five years thereafter. If your levels are high, lifestyle changes such as diet, exercise, and/or prescription drugs can put them in a healthy range. Here are some facts about keeping your cholesterol in check.

• Know your HDL and LDL, not just your total cholesterol. What’s important is the ratio of high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or “good” cholesterol, to low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or “bad” cholesterol. HDL soaks up excess cholesterol and returns it to the liver where it’s processed for excretion. LDL transports cholesterol via the bloodstream and clogs arteries, slowing circulation and raising the risk of heart disease and can trigger a heart attack or stroke. Target numbers to shoot for are

HDL above 50 and LDL below 100.

• Boost your good HDL cholesterol. The higher the number the better. The most effective way is to exercise. A brisk walk or a ride on a bike for 30 minutes most days of the week can raise HDL five points.

• High cholesterol can be inherited but lifestyle can override genes. Healthy eating, exercising, and controlling other risk factors should make up for slow LDL removal. Don’t delay cholesterol testing especially if an immediate family member suffered an early heart attack or has high cholesterol. A very small number of women and men can trace their high LDL numbers solely to genes and may require drugs to control it.

• Eat and live well. Trade artery-clogging saturated fat (found in meat, cheese, and palm kernel or coconut oils) for heart-healthy monounsaturated fats (olive oil and avocados) and polyunsaturated fats (salmon and walnuts). Also stop smoking and practice stress-relieving activities such as yoga, meditation or reading a good book.

• Medication works and may be needed long term. Statins, prescription cholesterol lowering drugs are one of the most effective ways to lower LDL levels. You’re a candidate if your LDL surpasses 160 and you have no other risk factors (such as hypertension or smoking), or if your LDL is 130 or higher, you have two or more risk factors (like a family history or heart disease or low HDL levels), and you haven’t been able to improve levels with diet and exercise.

As always, talk with your doctor about the best approach for you to lower your cholesterol.

### **LISTEN AND ENJOY**

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging is pleased to make available tickets to the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra's "Autumnal Fantasies" on Saturday, November 11, 2006. The concert is at the Palace Theatre in downtown Greensburg at 8:00 p.m.

Schumann's "Rhenish" Symphony is a charming work that was inspired by the Rhine River and a ceremony at the Cologne Cathedral. Beethoven's great Violin Concerto will be performed by Timothy Fain. The program opens with a lyrical work by native Westmoreland County composer, Daniel Crozier.

Tickets will be distributed by a random drawing. Please send your request with the following information:

Name  
Address  
Telephone number  
Number of tickets requested (1 or 2) and  
a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Jean Healey  
Area Agency on Aging  
200 S. Main Street  
Greensburg, PA 15601

Your request must be postmarked no later than Wednesday, October 4, 2006. You must be a Westmoreland County resident age 60 or older

to receive these tickets. Transportation is not provided.

### **2006 HEALTH & EDUCATION EXPO**

*OCTOBER 25, 2006*

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging, Westmoreland Human Opportunities, the Westmoreland County Health & Welfare Council, Westmoreland Casemanagement & Supports, Inc., and the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners are proud to sponsor the 2006 HEALTH & EDUCATION EXPO. Caregivers, seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public are welcome to attend.

There will be many activities, free health screenings and information, light refreshments, free parking, and a live radio broadcast by 1480 WCNS. A variety of vendors are participating, providing their assistance and information to address every health and care issue imaginable. Those attending will have access to bone density testing, stroke screen, skin analysis, blood pressure, lung screen, body fat analysis, oxygen levels, vision, hearing and glaucoma screens, massages, unclaimed property program, and nutrition information – ALL FOR FREE.

Flu shots will be available at no charge with certain health plans although some people may be charged depending on their Medicare supplemental health plan coverage. Please be prepared with cash or check if yours is not one of the accepted insurance plans. Mark your calendar for:

Wednesday, October 25  
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Four Points Sheraton  
Greensburg

Come anytime, stay as long as you like and bring a friend. No pre-registration required.

Need a ride??? Seniors age 60 and older can use their red card for transportation with a one-day advanced reservation through their local taxi company. The Westmoreland County Transit Authority (WCTA) offers reduced fare trips as follows:

- Free pass for riders over age 65.
- ½ fare for people with disabilities.
- ½ fare for people with a Medicare card but not yet 65.

For WCTA information, call 724-834-9282 or 1-800-221-9282.

You don't want to miss this once a year OPPORTUNITY to obtain all this valuable information in one place. For more details, contact the Area Agency on Aging at 724-830-4488 or 1-800-442-8000.

### **SEARCHING FOR A JOB?**

If you are 55 years of age or older, a resident of Westmoreland County, and your income falls within our guidelines, you may be eligible for our training program.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) at Westmoreland County Community College enrolls low-income older adults to update old skills or get training in new skills, allowing

you to earn while you learn in preparation for re-entering the job market. All positions earn \$5.15 per hour, 20 hours per week.

For more information, please call Mimi Owens at 724-925-4098 or Rebecca Dunn at 724-925-4231 or toll-free at 1-800-262-2103 and ask for the Lifelong Learning Center.

Available Training Positions:

**Docent** – Training provided in archiving, researching, and preserving local history.

**Clerical Trainee** – Office work, familiarity with office machines helpful but not required. Primary duties may include receptionist activities, copying and collating materials for mass mailings, assisting with fundraising activities, and maintaining information areas.

**Shop keeping** – Learn aspects of retail sales and shop management in a non-profit setting.

**Dietary Aide** – Must be knowledgeable in minimal food preparation techniques and have the ability to work with senior citizens.

**Library Aides** – Positions available throughout Westmoreland County. Individuals should possess an inquisitive, helpful attitude.  
**Maintenance/Groundskeeper** – Positions available in the Greensburg and Scottdale areas.

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