

elder FORUM

Your Local Age Information Center ~ *Choices for a life-long journey*

HOARDING

accumulate - collect - save - stash - stockpile

Those are just a few of the words that begin to describe a disorder known as compulsive hoarding. Today, a large number of people do not understand what it means or understand the dangers associated with this type of behavior. At first it may not sound very serious, but it can very quickly become unmanageable.

When *Alice filed her tax abatement request at town hall local officials did not expect the public health issue they were about to uncover. A routine home tax assessment visit revealed a home filled - floor to ceiling - with trash, newspapers, magazines, clothes and many other items. With a single narrow pathway that led from the front door to the kitchen, the elder homeowner admitted she had trouble throwing items away and things really spiraled out of control when her husband died 10 years ago.

*Joanne is enrolled in the Compulsive Hoarding Program at Elder Services. She works with staff to resolve safety risks, eliminate clutter, and repair some long-standing plumbing and structural problems.

However, the effects of the intervention extend way beyond her housing concerns. Joanne needed to be connected to health care with public supports. For years she did not have medical or prescription

Compulsive or pathological hoarding is a disorder marked by an obsessive need to acquire, and failure to use or discard, a significant amount of possessions, even if the items are worthless, hazardous, or unsanitary.

Compulsive hoarding causes large amounts of clutter and sometimes impairments to basic living activities like mobility, cooking, cleaning, showering, and sleeping.

insurance. Now she sees a doctor who manages her high blood pressure, cholesterol, depression and anxiety.

* not their real names



In response to a family's request for a well-being check on an elder relative, police were immediately hampered by a cluttered, overgrown yard, shades pulled completely down and no visibility into the home. When they finally made their way to the door - blocked by trash and furniture, *John was on the floor. He had fallen on old newspapers and mail piled high on a table that had toppled over. He could not get up and laid there for almost a day. While hospitalized, his family told him things had to be cleaned up before he could go home. He agreed to work with staff in the Compulsive Hoarding Program allowing workers to sort his belongings, throw out trash to get him back into his home.

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Save the Date!

June 10, 2010

Elder Services Annual Golf Classic
Meadow Creek Golf Club, Dracut, MA



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To The Reader

Congress recently passed a new Patient Protection Act that speaks to the desire of older adults to live at home. This new federal law provides incentives for states to shift their spending to community care services and less on nursing home care. Not only does this afford older adults the choice of remaining in the community, but it could save taxpayers the expense of housing elder residents in nursing homes.

In Massachusetts, the home care service system had to implement a wait list for older adults to receive the home care services they needed. Today more than 2,000 elder residents living in Massachusetts are waiting for home care help. However, the doors to nursing homes remain open, and there are no wait lists for nursing home services. This makes little financial sense and does not truly speak to the preference of most older adults who wish it to remain safe, active and independent in their own community.

Nursing home use has dropped more than 25% over the last 10 years. That drop has saved Massachusetts tax payers as much as \$540 million annually.

It's time to reinvest some of that dividend into home care and end the wait lists that exist today. This solution helps the state economy, individual taxpayers and Massachusetts elders who need and deserve our support.


Rosanne DiStefano
Executive Director



Rosanne DiStefano
Executive Director

Planned Giving

Your Personal Legacy

Our *Generation-to-Generation Society* was established to ensure and preserve the mission of Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley. Our mission is to provide quality in-home services, programs and support that will give older adults more choices to remain safe and independent in their own homes.

We are fortunate to have many generous individuals who support Elder Services through our annual appeals and our public fundraising events. Planned Gifts, however, strengthen the Agency's financial foundation by providing funds over time to fuel innovation and safeguard essential services during uncertain economic times. Planned Gifts also provide significant benefits to donors.

Our Development Department will work closely and confidentially with you and your financial advisor to identify a plan that is right for you. Depending on your own situation, by making a Planned Gift to Elder Services, you may be able to increase your annual income on investments, or reduce estate, income, or capital gains taxes. Whether these are applicable to your situation can be determined with an individual financial advisor. Together, we can determine if Planned Giving is the best way for you to help support Elder Services.

Gift giving vehicles, can provide you with valuable tax benefits and at the same time can create a wonderful and personal legacy that will help Elder Services succeed for generations to come. The benefits of Planned Giving can help increase annual income, reduce income tax, and avoid Capital Gains tax.

Call our Development Office to find out how you can help ensure the future of Elder Services.



Welcome our newly appointed members of the Board of Directors:

Brenda Sweeny - Representing Haverhill

Pam Blaquire, Director, Boxford Council on Aging

Hoarding *continued from page 1*

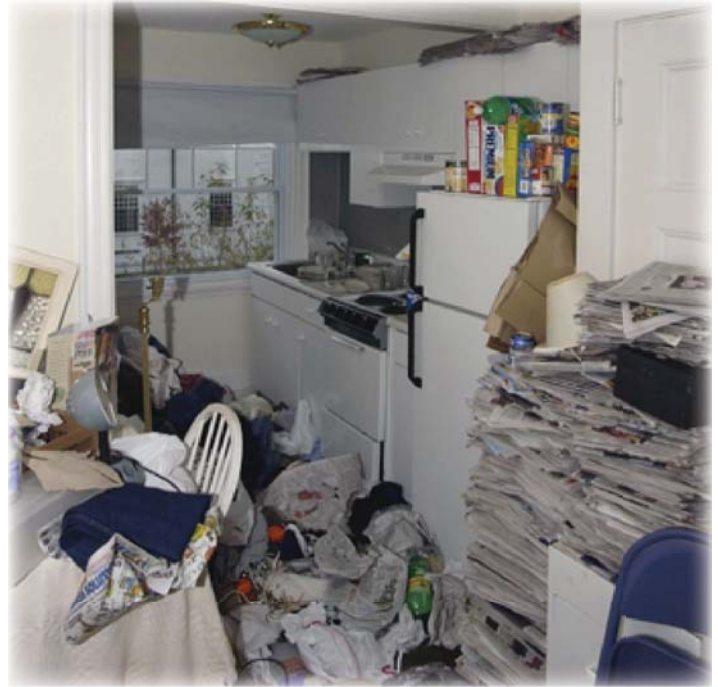
A team organized the rooms John spends the most amount of time in. He works with a social worker on issues that drive his hoarding behavior and now lives safely at home with help from Elder Services.

These are just two examples of the personal and public risks of compulsive hoarding in older adults. The Compulsive Hoarding Program at Elder Services provides on-going, in-home counseling, de-cluttering, organizing support, access to health care, including psychiatric services.

Safer Homes, the volunteer component, has trained volunteers who work with participants and enhance the program's effectiveness through long-term caring relationships, hands-on help organizing and communication with the program social worker. This program improved the health and safety of 60 older adults, all high risk due to compulsive hoarding. Intervention insures long-term safety through continued program connection.

With access to health care, mental health services, nutritional services, medical and prescription insurance, *Safer Homes* provides support in an effective, low-cost manner benefitting the elder and the helper.

If you or someone you know has a tendency to keep lots of stuff - things most people would consider junk - bottles, newspapers, magazines, this could be a sign of hoarding. Even useful things - clothes, craft supplies, *bargains* too good to pass up, but items the person doesn't wear or use, can indicate a problem, maybe with acquiring or hoarding.



Compulsive Hoarding impairs basic living activities like mobility or cooking.

Look for safety risks - things piled on top of or covering the stove, pathways too narrow to walk safely, or bed and chairs so full so they can't be used. Hoarding needs to be addressed in a very patient and caring way. Simply throwing things away is not the best way to proceed because the results can be hurt feelings, damaged relationships and even more hoarding as a way to regain control.

When helping someone de-clutter:

- *Be kind* ~ Relationship is key.
- *Be patient* ~ Give them time to think and process prior to discarding.
- *Be empathic* ~ It's hard for the person to discard things and they need to know you understand that.
- *Let them set the pace* ~ Don't be pushy, let them set the pace especially in the beginning.
- *Don't touch without permission and always ask first* ~ What do *you* want to start with?
- *Encouragement* ~ With progress, no matter how small, it is very important they know you understand how hard they are working.

Helpful Tips:

- Focus on one area. As you work, it will become easier for you to actually see improvement.
- Give yourself credit for each thing you do. Whether it's one small pile of papers or one box or bag of clothes to donate: it **ALL** counts.
- Give yourself credit for each step along the way. This is essential because first the job you tackle may seem overwhelming and you may want to stop before getting started.
- For extra reinforcement and to recognize your successes, large and small use before and after photographs. Sometimes, the things you do accomplish become invisible after you do them.

Title III Grants Awarded \$713,625

As the Area Agency on Aging for the Merrimack Valley, Elder Services awards Title III funds of the Older Americans Act to local community agencies. The following grants were awarded:

HomeCare, Inc. \$27,475
Elder Health Clinics with MH assessments in the Gr. Lawrence, Haverhill and Newburyport areas.

VNA of Greater Lowell \$8,000
Provide walk-in health clinics providing health screenings, education and referrals.

Merrimack Valley Legal Services \$69,055
Information, advice and referral, client representation, advocacy, negotiation, community education and training. Priorities are housing, income maintenance, health care and protection of individual rights.

International Institute of Lowell \$10,000
Provide low fee or free legal services for 70 low income, elder immigrants in Gr. Lowell. Services include citizenship application preparation, classes and family reunification.

Lowell Transitional Living Center \$4,000
Provide Emergency shelter beds and appropriate supportive services for homeless elders.

Emmaus Inc. \$4,000
Housing, nutrition, response to isolation, mental health and health insurance information.

Asian Center of Merrimack Valley \$4,365
Help Asian elders to access resources, education, and encourage participation in activities at the Lawrence Council on Aging.

Lawrence Council on Aging \$4,365
Increase access to services for minority elders via outreach and referral, education, interpretation services, ESL trainings.

Mass. Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS) \$4,365
Outreach, information, referral and other services for Portuguese-speaking elders in the Lowell area.

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Assoc. \$3,000
Outreach, education to Cambodian elders about programs and services including transportation and translation services

Gr. Lawrence Regional Vocational High School \$575,000 - Congregate and home-delivered meal service throughout the Merrimack Valley.

We thank all our volunteers from the Advisory Council and the Board of Directors for their work on the proposal review committees.

GRANTS

Griffen-White Foundation
Mental Health Services
\$18,179

TD Bank
Financial Literacy
\$2,500

George Wadleigh Foundation
Basic Necessities Program
\$60,000

VOLUNTEERING

Something always on Elder Services' wish list - *Volunteers*. We are looking for individuals, families or groups who want a positive volunteer experience while helping older adults. Listed below are just a few great possibilities to consider. Maybe you, a friend, you and your friend or your family has an interest in helping. For details, or to speak with someone about volunteering, please call Gerry Proulx at 978-946-1445. (* *urgent need*)

Brown Bag Food Program
Health Insurance Counselors
Nursing Home Ombudsmen
***Friends in Deed**

***Drivers**
***Medical Advocates**
Events & Activities
Money Managers

Age Information Center

One Call. Many Choices.
 800-892-0890 ~ 978-683-7747
 FAX 978-687-1067 ~ TTY 800-924-4222
 www.esmv.org ~ e-mail: info@esmv.org

Circuit Breaker Tax Credit - Mass. residents, 65 or older who paid rent or real estate taxes during the tax year may be eligible for the *Circuit Breaker Tax Credit*. The credit is for senior homeowners or renters meeting income and eligibility requirements. Homeowners may claim the credit if they paid more than 10% of their total income

for real estate taxes including water and sewer charges. Renters can count 25% of their rent as real estate tax payments. You must file a state tax return to claim the credit. If the credit is greater than the amount of income taxes you owe, the state will give you a refund for the difference. The maximum credit for tax year 2009 is \$960 and you may file retroactively for 3 years.



Events and Activities

Elder Network Meetings ~ 11:30 am. Open to all. Call or e-mail jhrenko@esmv.org to be placed on the mailing list. Monthly notices are e-mailed with topic and meeting location.

	April	May
Gr. Haverhill/Newburyport	4/7	5/12
Gr. Lawrence	4/14	5/19
Gr. Lowell	4/21	5/26

April 24 - Annual Alzheimer's Conference - "Finding Balance in a Time of Change". Featured Speakers: Drs. Brent Forester and Thomas Shea, Attorney Ramsey Bahrawy, Nancy Harper, RN. Wyndham Hotel, Andover - 8:30 am - 12:30 pm. The conference is offered to family caregivers at no cost. There is a professional fee of \$25 which includes CEUs. For details or to register, please call Janice Boyd at 978-946-1231.

May 21 Massachusetts SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) Program - First statewide conference - Holiday Inn, 700 Myles Standish Blvd, Taunton, MA - 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Conference is for service providers and aims to raise awareness about the importance of engaging elder consumers in their healthcare to prevent healthcare errors, fraud and abuse. Conference is free of charge. For details, call Pat Sadre at 800-892-0890, 1352.

June 10 - Elder Services Annual Golf Classic - Meadow Creek, Dracut, MA - 8:00 am shotgun.

Join us for one of the best charity tournaments this season. New *all inclusive* entry fee gives players access to all games, contests and other opportunities to win prizes. Call Bonnie Sisson, Development Office - 978-946-1433 for details on sponsorships and foursomes. Better yet, visit our **NEW Golf Event Website** at www.esmvgolf.com for very easy registration, payment & confirmation!!



You may view our newsletter, *Elder Forum*, in full color - online at www.esmv.org

\$ WIN CASH \$

Join Elder Services Auto Insurance Program
Open Membership - Join anytime

- Get a 5% discount on your car insurance
- Multiple vehicle discounts
- No finance billing option

Elder Services receives a charitable contribution of 2% of your annual insurance premium.
Call 800-892-0890 for more details.

\$ SAVE CASH \$

Elder Services Lottery
Monthly Prizes Total \$1025

1 - \$500 1 - \$200 1 - \$100 4 - \$50 1 - \$25

Annual Membership \$50 - Pick your lucky 3 digits and sign up. Looking for a great gift - give one that keeps giving! Monthly drawing is the last Tuesday of each month at Elder Services. Mail your check today to:

Elder Services Lottery
360 Merrimack Street, Bld. 5, Lawrence, MA 01843
Call 800-892-0890, ext. 1429 for more details.

Area Agency on Aging - Age Info Center
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www.esmv.org ~ e-mail: info@esmv.org

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Let's Go Green!

Elder Forum - Elder Services wants to go GREEN! To help reduce costs, associated with getting our newsletter to you, **Elder Forum** will now be posted as a pdf file on our new website at www.esmv.org. And, for our readers, who prefer to be paperless, they can e-mail their current e-address to Alison G. at agraziano@esmv.org.

