

## **Governor Spitzer makes commitment to Seniors**



*Governor Eliot Spitzer made a commitment to older persons when he addressed the audience at Senior Citizen Recognition Day. (Judy Sanders photo)*

Speaking to a cheering crowd of New York seniors gathered in Albany to celebrate Senior Citizens' Day, Governor Eliot Spitzer said "I hope you understand that my presence here reflects a deep commitment on my part to ensure that the interests of seniors are respected, funded and taken care of in this administration. It's a top priority."

Over 400 older persons, their families and representatives of Area Agencies on Aging from across the State attended the ceremony at the Empire State Plaza on Tuesday May 8th. The annual event is sponsored by the New York State Office for the Aging, its Advisory Committees and Legislative partners. The theme of this year's event was "Volunteers Make It Happen: Helping Family, Friends, and Neighbors Remain in Their Homes and Communities."

During the event, Director Michael Burgess presented awards to 78 individuals, who were

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## **Addressing Medicare Scams**

Director Michael Burgess has written to Senator Herb Kohl (Wisconsin), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, to share his concerns as the Committee investigates the practices of insurers and their agents selling Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage programs. Part D assists seniors and disabled beneficiaries in paying for prescription drugs, a long-needed and essential benefit. However, people need to understand it and Director Burgess recommends that the program be revamped.

The Medicare Modernization Act which established the Part D and Advantage plans has caused confusion that some unscrupulous insurance agents have been using to sell plans that leave people with no coverage.

NYSOFA operates the Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) to provide free, unbiased information, education, and counseling regarding Medicare and other health insurance programs and benefits. Director Burgess urges all Medicare beneficiaries to call the HIICAP program in their county to explain health insurance and the new Medicare programs. Just call 1-800-701-0501.

## **NYSOFA is heard at inaugural Grandparents Conference**

Michael Burgess was an opening speaker at the first International Conference for Grandparents in Brooklyn on May 7, organized by Suffolk resident Brigitte Castellano, Executive Director of the National Committee of Grandparents for Children's Rights.

Director Burgess focused on several NYS initiatives, funded through NYSOFA, that were early models for services for grandparents rais-

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## Grandparents Conference...

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ing their grandchildren. He described funding to support the Kinship Care program and the creation of a NYS Family Caregivers Council to be staffed by NYSOFA.

The conference's international feel was evident with presentations from caregivers and support networks from around the world. It was remarkable to discover many of the same barriers confront kin caregivers throughout the world, despite differences in government structures, laws and cultures. The conference offered the opportunity to learn from one another and for activists to coalesce around common issues.

## Want to join us?

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## Listening Forums are seeking public input

Governor Spitzer has announced a series of "People First" Coordinated Care Listening Forums aimed at making New York's health and service systems patient-centered, rather than focused on the institutions that deliver care. According to Department of Health (DOH) Commissioner Richard F. Daines, "Access to appropriate, high-quality care is our goal for all New Yorkers in need. Often the people using these services are in the best position to advise us on the changes they need."

The first of these forums was held in New Paltz on May 14, bringing almost 500 people together with Department of Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, Office of Mental Health Commissioner Michael F. Hogan, Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Commissioner Karen M. Carpenter-Palumbo, and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Diana Jones Ritter to obtain input from the people who use multiple services in the area of health care, addiction, mental health and developmental disabilities.

Additional forums will be held (schedule follows). Older persons and their caretakers can relate the difficulties they encounter and the frustration they feel as they access delivery systems designed to provide care. Professionals can also express the fact that aging is one more factor that complicates coordination of care:

**New York City:** June 6, 12-2 pm, York College / CUNY, 94 - 20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11451, 718-262-2000

**Buffalo:** June 19, 4-6 pm, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, David C. Hohn, MD, Lecture Hall, Research Studies Center, Corner of Elm & Carlton Sts., Buffalo, NY 14263, 877-275-7724 or 716-845-2300

**Syracuse:** June 20, 2-4 pm, Renaissance Hotel, Lafayette Theater, 701 E. Genesee St., Syracuse, NY 13210. Registration begins 1:30 pm, 1-315-479-7000

**Plattsburgh:** 7/13/07 (details to be announced)

# Aging & You

NYSOFA's latest Aging & You television program was released to cable stations June 1st. In "Healthcare Counseling and Assistance," Michael Burgess discusses HIICAP and the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program with Linda Petrosino, NYS HIICAP Coordinator, and Marty Haase, NYS LTC Ombudsman.

For broadcast times, call your cable company and ask to speak to the Access Coordinator. To receive this program, call our Public Information Officer Reza Mizbani at 518-474-7181.

## EPIC PROGRAM CHANGES

A recent change to New York State law requires EPIC enrollees to join a Medicare Part D drug plan to be eligible. EPIC will provide Part D premium assistance to all enrollees so **they will not be financially disadvantaged**.

Seniors can be assured that EPIC will continue to provide supplemental coverage for their drug costs not covered by Medicare including deductibles, co-payments, non-covered drugs and coverage gap. By using EPIC and Medicare together, seniors can save more on their prescription drugs.

The law is effective July 1, 2007. For more information contact EPIC's toll-free Helpline at 1-800-332-3742 (TTY 1-800-290-9138).

# Director's Corner

Director Michael J. Burgess



Greetings and welcome to the inaugural edition of the NYSOFA News. I hope you find this and subsequent issues to be informative, helpful and maybe in some instances entertaining. Initially, we plan to publish on a monthly basis. You will note



that this issue includes a form that can be returned to us by those interested in receiving the publication. Please feel free to share this edition with others who may want to receive it.

NYSOFA News is designed to provide useful information to individuals interested in or involved in the field of aging in New York State. We plan to include a mix of articles that will keep you up to date on major programs and services to serve the needs of older New Yorkers, family members and other caregivers. It will also include articles of general interest to professionals in the field, as well as to members of the public.

In future issues, this column will provide updates and information that I consider of critical importance to you. Hopefully I will provide you with information that you can use to advocate for older New Yorkers at every level of government and throughout our local communities as well.

We stand on the verge of an exciting era in our history. We will rely more on the wisdom and experience of our elders than ever before, as we meet and accept the challenges of this young century. As Director of the New York State Office for the Aging, I am committed to conveying the views, protecting the rights, and addressing the needs of older adults.

Thank you, and I look forward to sharing my thoughts with you in the future.



*is a publication of the*

**New York State Office for the Aging**  
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*Our sole purpose is to improve communications between all components of the aging network within New York State and to work toward improving the lives of older persons everywhere. Feel free to copy and distribute this publication.*

Eliot Spitzer Governor	Michael J. Burgess Director
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## Senior recognition...

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nominated for recognition. Governor Spitzer announced three initiatives on healthcare for seniors. These initiatives are part of Governor Spitzer's multi-faceted strategy to shift New York State's healthcare system from the institution-centered system of the past to a patient-driven system of the future. The three policy initiatives include creation of the Family Caregivers Council, the Senior Health Check-Up and NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care.

The Governor stated: "We must shift toward a patient-based system that supports family care-



At left, Senator Martin Golden, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Aging, honored RoseMarie Carro with the NYS Senior Citizen of the Year Award. At right, Assemblyman Steven Englebright, Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Aging, presented Margaret Morgan with the NYS Senior Citizen of the Year Award. (photos courtesy of Senate and Assembly staff)

givers, provides preventive care, and reforms long-term care so more seniors can stay in their homes and communities as long as they can."

Director Burgess added "The contributions made by these extraordinary volunteers we honor today enrich the lives of seniors across our state every day." Sixty awardees and their county office for the aging representatives attended, along with members of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Aging, the NYSOFA Services Advisory Committee and service providers.

## Calendar OF EVENTS

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa

- **June 6-8** - The Senior Games, Cortland, NY
- **June 19-20** - Aging Concerns Unite Us (ACUU) Conference, Albany, NY
- **August 23 - September 3** - State Fair, Syracuse, NY (NYSOFA will have a booth)

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