

## New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc.

# MEMBER UPDATE

Helpline (800) 333-4374

## StateWide Members Pay It Forward

### *A Message from the Executive Director*



**Maria Alvarez**

New York StateWide Senior Action Council celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.

As we know, our organization was founded through the Federal Government's War on Poverty Initiative. These funds were made available in order to combat perceptible inequalities across the country, which were directly attributable to the lack of resources in many communities. Older Americans, living on fixed incomes, and just beginning to benefit from programs such as Medicare, were seen as being at risk.

True to the brand of fighting spirit that one can only find in New York, seniors organized across the state and went on to form New York StateWide Senior Action Council in 1972. Under our first director, Robert O'Connell, StateWide was – and still is – the only grassroots senior advocacy program that brings seniors together across our state for self-empowerment and to improve the quality of life for older New Yorkers and their families.

Over the years, there have been great battles and campaigns – some won (*EPIC, Patients Bill of Rights*), some lost (*Medicare Modernization Act of 2006*), and some that have yet to be resolved (*Universal Healthcare*). But one thing that remains a constant is our membership's commitment to our mission and organization.

Today, more than ever, StateWide is needed. *According to the US Census Bureau, New York State's senior citizens poverty rate stands at 13.8%*. However, through our *NYS Elder Economic Security Index* we know that in the face of increasing healthcare, prescription drugs, housing, and food costs, many more older New Yorkers fail to make ends meet on their monthly incomes alone.

Seniors are living longer, baby boomers are aging in, and New York State is graying...*now more than ever we need to ensure that the StateWide movement not only continues, but is strengthened.*

We will be conducting a campaign for future generations...A campaign that will ensure that future generations of New York State seniors continue to enjoy the fruits of the hard work that began with our membership 40 years ago.

### **A Call To Action**

We are looking for the founders of StateWide at the local level...We are looking for StateWide artifacts that were used for organizing over the years...We are seeking an extra push in membership recruitment ...We are seeking extra funding for our Rose Kryzak Fund to continue our important advocacy work...and *we want everyone to come help us celebrate in Saratoga Springs next year at StateWide's 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention and Gala Celebration.*

As always, we count on our members and friends to make things happen...

*We Will See You There!*

**Fall 2011**

## Get Involved in StateWide's "Pay It Forward Campaign"!

Much like the famous book and movie, StateWide's "Pay it Forward Campaign" raises funds to ensure that our membership today can continue to strengthen the quality of life of our senior of tomorrow. We are embarking on a year-long fundraising campaign that will culminate in our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2012.

Here are 2 ways that you can help:

✓	<p><b><u>StateWide Chapters &amp; Individual Members</u></b> : Meet fundraising goals, and receive <b><u>incentives to send a delegation to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala dinner</u></b>. We'll get you started with a <b><u>tool kit and talking points</u></b> and we'll be there to help coach you through. We'll also be here to hear from you about ways to improve our outreach.</p>
✓	<p><b><u>Gala Journal</u></b>: Ask community businesses to support StateWide the next time you use your senior buying power! Ask your hairdresser or barber, florist or a favorite restaurant or bakery, doctor's office or skilled nursing facility, bank or a law office, stockbroker or insurance broker, snow removal service. <b><i>Anywhere you do business is a great place to ask for support for StateWide's efforts to improve the lives of senior citizens and families in New York State.</i></b> An honor roll will be created acknowledging contributions made either in memory of a local senior citizen or in honor of a local resident. Local businesses that are frequented by seniors will be asked to contribute through advertising in our <b><u>Gala Journal</u></b>. Copies of the Journal <b><u>will be distributed throughout the state so that members of senior clubs can see which local businesses have offered their support.</u></b></p>

Indeed, you can help "pay it forward" with your continued advocacy efforts and by calling our office to find out how you can participate in raising funds to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We'll send you a fundraising toolkit and you'll see how fast and easy it can be to make a difference. And, hopefully, the good things you do for others will bring you good luck as well.

## ***Secretary of State Perales Encourages Seniors to call 800-503-9000 each month for useful information***

NYS Secretary of State Cesar Perales spoke at StateWide's Convention and informed attendees that as a result of the Administration's consolidation of agencies, responsibilities for the State's Consumer Protection Board are now located in the Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection. A recent initiative is the Senior Information line. New Yorkers can call the toll-free number to access the latest news about issues of interest to seniors. Each month, the line will offer free information that seniors can use to stay safe, maximize their independence and improve their everyday lives. This is particularly valuable for those who do not have computer access. Seniors can access the line by dialing 1-800-503-9000. All information will be available in English and Spanish. A new topic will be recorded monthly.



***Secretary of State Cesar Perales***

### ***Thinking about changing your Medicare Coverage for 2012?***

This year, you need to make a choice by December 7, 2011.

It is particularly important to be informed when electing a plan this year, since further changes in the EPIC program will be effective January 1, 2012.

#### **What if you change your mind?**

- Between January 1 and February 14, if you are unhappy with your Medicare Advantage Plan choice, you have one opportunity to disenroll from your Medicare Advantage plan, then change to Original Medicare with or without also selecting a separate stand-alone Medicare drug plan.
- During the year there are unique special enrollment periods, depending on your individual circumstances, that you **may** qualify for, allowing you to make changes in coverage.

#### **Questions?**

Make informed decisions about your coverage and understand your rights.

**Call StateWide at 1-800-333-4374 for assistance.**

### ***Have you received your 2012 StateWide Pocket Calendar?***

Members can request a calendar by calling 1-800-333-4374 or contacting your Chapters. Don't forget to ask about upcoming meetings or ways to get involved with your Chapter!

**NYC** - Muriel Beach - 212-255-2226 or [murielbeach@hotmail.com](mailto:murielbeach@hotmail.com)

**North Country** - Mary Jane Barnes - 315-714-2031 or [maryjanebarnes13617@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjanebarnes13617@yahoo.com)

**Western New York** - Helen Sanders - 716-832-5455 or [helensand37@msn.com](mailto:helensand37@msn.com)

**Finger Lakes** - Sarah King - 315-253-2035 or [sking1948@verizon.net](mailto:sking1948@verizon.net)

**Wayne County** - Frank Clark - 315-589-8535 or [fclarsr@yahoo.com](mailto:fclarsr@yahoo.com)

**Hudson Valley/Rockland** - Anna Stellwag - 845-359-0769 or [astellwag@juno.com](mailto:astellwag@juno.com)

**Hudson Valley/Sullivan** - Priscilla Bassett - 845-985-7901 or [epbass@hughes.net](mailto:epbass@hughes.net)

**Capital District** - StateWide Headquarters - 518-436-1006 or [statewide4@gmail.com](mailto:statewide4@gmail.com)

**Medicare/Patients Rights Helpline (800) 333-4374**

## When You're In the Hospital Ask if You've Been Admitted

The next time you go to the hospital and receive care, make sure to ask one important question: **“What is my status: Am I Admitted to the Hospital or am I under Observation?”** The answer to this question can mean a difference of thousands of dollars and who pays for future care – you or your insurance company.

A new trend has been for hospitals to care for patients who are not admitted, but are deemed to be in “observation status.” The use of observation status may be increasing because of new Medicare plans to reduce reimbursement rates for hospitals with high readmission rates. **By putting patients in observation status, they are not counted as “admissions.”** Your care may be the same, but there is one important difference – and that’s how the hospital gets paid by Medicare. **If you are admitted Medicare Part A will pay, but if not, Medicare Part B pays.**

The distinction is an important one since **observation status can lead to a denial of coverage for any subsequent discharge to a skilled nursing facility. A three day hospital stay is required for Medicare to cover any skilled nursing care, and that means you must be admitted to the hospital, not in observation status, for your nursing home care to be covered by Medicare.** The Center for Medicare Advocacy recently filed a lawsuit against Medicare challenging the “observation status” that hospitals are using. The lawsuit charges that the observation status can lead to a denial of coverage when the patient needs skilled nursing care upon discharge. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reports that there has been a dramatic increase in the use of observation status by hospitals in the past few years. ***Many Medicare beneficiaries are not aware of their status unless they inquire, so we urge all persons to ask if they are formally being admitted to the hospital.***

In general, it’s important to **know your rights as a hospital patient.** Patients are informed of these rights when admitted, but since that is often a time of high stress it is best to know your rights ahead of any hospital stay. The NYS Department of Health has a 40 page booklet describing those rights that is worth the read, in fact, StateWide was instrumental in passing the law that required the publication in order to empower patients. Copies can be printed from a link on StateWide’s website [http://www.nysenior.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=18](http://www.nysenior.org/wordpress/?page_id=18).

Senate Bill #	Assembly Bill #	Sponsor	Title	Status
S112	A399	Diaz - Gunther	Establishes NY certified retirement community program within OFA; provides certification that a community is advantageous for retirees to live in, encourages retirees to live there and after certification, OFA shall provide assistance to the community	Referred to Assembly Aging Committee, Referred to Senate Aging Committee, reported to Senate Finance Committee
S1040	A546	Klein - Dinowitz	Requires the Office of Children and family services to track and report elder abuse and to issue a biennial report of the governor and legislature and OFA regarding the incidence of elder abuse in the state	Referred to Aging Committees in both houses
None	A551	Gottfried	Requires diversion of new admissions to nursing homes found providing inadequate care for a period of 48 hours	Passed by Assembly Health Committee, reported to Assembly Ways and Means Committee
None	A655	Gottfried	Requires health care providers to disclose errors in diagnosis, treatment or other services that the provider knows has caused substantial harm or significant risk of substantial harm	referred to Assembly Health Committee, passed, referred to Codes Committee, passed referred to Rules Committee
S3293-B	A676	DeFrancisco - Magnarelli	Establishes "Gold Alert" clearinghouse for missing vulnerable adults; coordinates state agency services for education and search for missing persons	Signed into law by Governor, July 2011

Senate Bill #	Assembly Bill #	Sponsor	Title	Status
None	A805	Gottfried	Establishes prescription drug discount program with rebates from manufacturers that are exempt from and exceed "best pricing rules"	Passed Assembly, June 2011; referred to Senate Rules Committee
S1303	A880	Duane/Kellner	Requires the State Office for the Aging to report on the delivery of services to and needs of traditionally underserved populations in their annual report to the Governor and the Legislature	Signed by Governor, Sept 2011
S4553	A921	Hannon - Gottfried	Establishes" safe staffing for quality of care act" which requires acute care and nursing facilities to implement direct care to patient staffing ratios	Referred to Assembly Health Committee, passed, referred to Codes Committee, passed referred to Rules Committee; referred to Senate Health Committee, reported to Senate Finance Committee
None	A2639	Gabryszak	Requires health insurance companies to allow its senior citizen insureds to designate a third party for notification purposes	Referred to Insurance Committee
S3576	A3813	Lavalle - Englebright	Extends deadline for STAR applications by allowing local laws to authorize local assessor to accept applications after the taxable status date up to January 10 of the following year	Passed Senate, referred to Assembly Real Property Taxation Committee

Senate Bill #	Assembly Bill #	Sponsor	Title	Status
S639	A3876	Golden - Englebright	Establishes reverse mortgage loan program through New York State mortgage agency which would set parameters of loans	Referred to Assembly Housing Committee; Referred to Senate Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee
S4399	A4219	Flanagan - Weisenberg	Enacts a Cemetery Bill of Rights to provide basic information needed by consumers and to be conspicuously posted or available upon request	Referred to Assembly Codes Committee, Senate Corporations Committee
S254	A4451	Maziarz - Brennan	Individual shall not become ineligible under EPIC program due to increase in social security benefits or public or private pension where such increase does not exceed consumer price index	Referred To Assembly Aging Committee; Referred to Senate Aging Committee; reported to Senate Finance Committee
None	A4535	Englebright	To amend the elder law, in relation to training in geriatric medicine, requires the medical training of a physician, physician assistant or specialist assistant include training in geriatric medicine in order to provide improved and appropriate care	Referred to Assembly Aging Committee
S3510	A5502	Maziarz - Heastie	Prohibits health insurers from requiring that the insured can only purchase prescriptions from mail order pharmacies or pay a higher co-pay if not mail order	Passed both houses
S212	A5978	Maziarz - Burling	Requires reporting by all pharmaceutical manufacturers of gifts to all health care practitioners exceeding \$75	Referred to Senate Health Committee, referred to Assembly Health Committee

Senate Bill #	Assembly Bill #	Sponsor	Title	Status
S3988	A6233	Lanza - Lopez	Requires coverage of oral chemotherapy treatments at lower co-payments charged for injectibles	Signed into law by Governor September 2011
S5259	A7343	Hannon - Gottfried	Expands Family Health Care Decision Act, relates to prescription forms and labels; requires interpretation services by mail order and chain pharmacies for the top seven languages spoken by persons of limited English speaking ability	Signed into law by the Governor, July 2011
S4728-A	A7368-A	Golden - Dinowitz	Allows continuing care retirement communities to offer either a life care contract or a fee-for-service contract	Signed into law by Governor, September 2011
S4171	A7673	Bonacic - Jaffee	Establishes middle class property tax circuit breaker program for persons with incomes below \$250,000 and maintains current tax rates on households with over one million dollars in annual income	Referred to Assembly Ways and Means Committee; referred to Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee
S5425	A7860	Duane - Gottfried	Establishes NY State Health Plan as a statewide comprehensive health insurance program; establishes a temporary commission on implementation of the plan	Referred to Assembly Health Committee; referred to Senate Finance Committee
S3576	A8366	Fuschillo - Gantt	Enables safe access to public roads for all users by utilizing "complete streets" principles in design	Signed by Governor August 2011

# StateWide Welcomes Our Newest Members & Supporters

## **Welcome to the following new individual members:**

Ruth Adams, Brooklyn  
Oscar Aldana, Richmond Hill  
Doris Blank, Rye  
Sandra Bliss, Cooperstown  
Joyce Brown, Spring Valley  
Anne Cardinale, Kingston  
Franklin & Linda Clark, Williamson  
Marilyn Clement, Saranac Lake  
Barbara Coleman, Troy  
Timmy J. Currier, Massena  
Annie Davis, Nanuet  
Theresa Davis, Canastota  
Gail & Andy De Marco, Rensselaer  
Alfred Deleel, Richville  
Kimberly Denis, Amsterdam  
Phyllis Doane, Canton  
Clare Dockery, New York  
Alleda Ellsworth, Kingston  
Catherine Ellsworth, Cooperstown  
Wendy Fieser, Germantown  
Paul Fowler, Malone  
Roberta Garden, Staten Island  
James Gruver, Tonawanda  
Mary Kanerva, Rochester  
Betsy Klampert, Scarsdale  
Nancy Miller, New York  
Bach-Tuyet Pham, West Nyack  
Richard Propp, MD, Albany  
Ronald & Nancy Reghner, Elmira  
Catherine Roberts, Scotia  
Livonia Smith, Westchester  
Carin Tinney, New York  
Sally Tvrdik, Franklin  
Brenda Ward, Buffalo

## **AND welcome to the following new organizational members:**

Catholic Charities Neighborhood Services  
Chemung County Department of Aging and Long Term Care  
Canton Senior Citizens  
Chautauqua County United Senior Citizens  
Colton-Pierrepont Sr. Racquetters  
Columbia County Office for the Aging  
Herricks Retired Educators Chapter  
Home Helpers and Direct Link  
Hudson Guild Social Action Committee  
Institute for the Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly  
Lake Como Senior Citizens  
Lewis County Office for the Aging  
Life Span  
Meals on Wheels of Western NY  
NNORC/Jewish Family Services  
Northeast Assoc. of the Blind at Albany  
Northern NY Rural Health Care Alliance  
NYS Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
NYSUT Retirees  
NYSUT E.D. #10 Retiree Council  
Retiree Chapter Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
Retirees Assoc. of District Council 37  
Sandstone Senior Citizens Club, Inc.  
SelfHelp  
SNAP  
Staying in Place  
Teamsters Retirees Local 237  
UJA Federation of Jewish Philanthropies  
Westchester County Department of Senior Programs & Services

## **We appreciate deeply the contribution made by our newest Lifetime members:**

Steve Conners, Hogansburg  
Kathleen and Andrew Yen, Ithaca

## **We thank the 2011 Contributors to the Rose Kryzak Fund for providing the resources for heightened advocacy.**

Elmer & Olga Bertsch, Schenectady  
Patricia Binzer, Glenmont  
Barbara Boggs, New York  
Nathaniel Brody, New York  
Janice Brown, Bronx  
Marion Campbell, Brasher Falls  
Anne Cardinale, Kingston  
James Collins, Queens  
Margaret Corbett, Rome  
John Eadie, Rensselaer  
Alleda Ellsworth, Kingston  
Catherine Ellsworth, Cooperstown  
Anne Emerman, New York  
Angela Fernandez, Astoria  
Everett Fox, New York  
Carol Gehrig, Whitesboro  
Ella Gordon, Flushing  
Harold & Eva Greene, Schenectady  
Barbara Hance, Russell  
Jaycee Holden, Brookyn  
Audrey Iszard, Bronx  
James L. Jackson, Ph.D., Cheektowaga  
Evelyn James, E. Elmhurst  
Eve Kahn, Suffern  
Milton Kaplan, Delmar  
Jean Klais, Cottekill  
Elizabeth Kryzak, Flushing  
Edward Kuehner, Corning  
Walter Lasky, Brooklyn  
Ed & Thelma Mager, Salem  
Susanne Maloy, Ithaca  
Rochelle Mangual, New York  
Gerda Mansell, Cheektowaga  
Adelaide Marshall, Swan Lake  
Annemarie Mayer, New York  
Ellen McGann, Corona  
Robert Miller, Russell  
Vernon & Beverly Miller, Harrisville  
Roxane Offner, Tuckahoe  
Yvonne Plummer, East Elmhurst  
Elaine Porter, Canton  
Catherine Raycroft, Niskayuna  
Betty Redden, Adams Center  
Kathleen Sanders, Albany  
Mary Sauerland, Hicksville  
Nelsa Selover, Aurora  
Betty Smith, Barker  
Ruth Smutz, Potsdam  
Elinor Spoor, Weedsport  
Kathleen Sucich, New York  
Don & Mary Towne, Gouverneur  
Sally Tvrdik, Franklin  
Regina Wachtel, New York  
Sherry and Richard Watson, Hammond  
Lucy & Richard Zaslow, Jamaica

StateWide membership includes a new subscription to our e-news. Just send your name and email address to us at [info@nysenior.org](mailto:info@nysenior.org) and include "e-news subscription" in the email subject line. Also frequently check our website at [www.nysenior.org](http://www.nysenior.org) for news updates.

**Medicare/Patients Rights Helpline (800) 333-4374**

# 2011 Convention

StateWide held another successful annual convention with informative speakers, interesting dialog and even some time for fun. Experts presented in panels, including Health System & Care Transitions, Consumer Issues & Protections, Livable Communities to Promote Aging with Dignity. Especially important was the chance to hear about the federal government's Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's new Office of Older Americans. Attendees received updates on State and Federal Legislative & Policy issues and a thorough Benefits Update describing changes in Medicare and EPIC. We were pleased to have special guests as our luncheon speakers, including NY Secretary of State Cesar Peralas, NYS Senate Aging Committee Chair David Valesky and NYS Assistant Attorney General Gary Brown. Many of the speakers prepared handouts and powerpoint presentations. These can be found at StateWide's web site at [www.nysenior.org](http://www.nysenior.org) or call us at 800-333-4374.



**Medicare/Patients Rights Helpline (800) 333-4374**

# 2011 Convention



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## *StateWide Salutes Outstanding Members At Convention 2011*



Above: Audrey Iszard, an active member of the New York City Chapter, was presented with the Paul E. Harenberg Award, recognizing her work to train and educate others about important issues and programs benefitting seniors. Also picture, left to right, presenter Lani Sanjek and StateWide's Executive Director Maria Alvarez.



Above: Harold Greene, StateWide's Treasurer, was presented with the Rose Kryzak Advocacy Award, recognizing him as an advocate and a leader on public policy issues locally and at the state level to promote the well being of older New Yorkers. Also pictured, StateWide's President, Jim Collins.



Right: Mary Jane Barnes, President of the North Country Chapter, was presented with the Robert E. O'Donnell Memorial Award, recognizing her extraordinary work to promote the growth and development of the NY StateWide Senior Action Council.

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