

# W.D. Goodwill Initiatives on Aging

## Goodwill Initiatives on Aging Heads to Southern Utah to Help Older Adults with Medicare Prescription Applications

*Nathan B. Judd*

The Internet-based Medicare Prescription application can be very frustrating for older adults. It has given rise to a need for programs to help older adults gain access to the prescription drug benefits for which they are eligible. There have been very few effective efforts made by the government to address this situation. The W.D. Goodwill Initiatives on Aging decided to make a tiny dent in the nationwide problem.

In January, with the help of a grant received from the Department of Human Services' Department of Aging and Adult Services, the Goodwill Initiatives on Aging director, O. William Farley, PhD, along with two staff members and six student volunteers, traveled to rural areas of Southern Utah to help older adults apply for the Medicare-Approved Prescription Drug Discount Card and a \$600 credit.



*Carolyn Moore works with an older woman in St. George*

The government offers both the Discount Card and the \$600 credit to help older adults with the rising costs of prescription drugs. The \$600 credit is for seniors with lower incomes who have a particularly hard time paying for the medications that, often times, keep them alive. Nationwide, only 12% of eligible Medicare beneficiaries have signed up for the Discount Card. Even though older adults can benefit greatly from these programs, and sometimes aren't able to afford their prescription drugs without this help, the application process for the Discount Card and the \$600 credit is difficult, and can only be done on the Internet.



*Jenny Allen helps older adults with the application process*

For younger generations, the Internet is a commonly used tool for a wide variety of activities, but most seniors have only done business in person or by mail. Many are uncomfortable with the thought of putting such private and important information online, and most of our older adults are completely computer illiterate.

Linda Sappington, Director of the Tri-County Aging Services in St. George, was very excited and helpful as the group set up two days at the St. George Senior Citizen Center, as well as a couple days at the Hurricane, Kanab, and Enterprise senior centers. Older adults were able to meet with College of

*continued...*

# W.D. Goodwill Initiatives on Aging

---

*...continued from previous page*

Social Work students who had been trained to walk them through the entire application process. All of the Goodwill Initiatives on Aging representatives had attended three comprehensive half-day training sessions prior to leaving for St. George. Flyers were posted at various locations, including all area pharmacies, in an attempt to notify and help as many older adults as possible. Local newspapers ran articles, and radio stations announced this important event.

Nervous, but optimistic, the group arrived at the St. George Senior Center the first morning to find ten people waiting. Over the course of the trip, the group had many opportunities to help. In all, they were able to assist 42 older adults with the application process and consulted with another 80 seniors.

With the applications for the Discount Card and the \$600 credit only available online, there are still millions of older adults who are eligible for these benefits but who simply can't apply. Members of the community can make an impact on this problem by helping an older adult with this 30-45 minute online application. For more information about this process, please contact the Salt Lake County Aging Services by calling (801) 468-2416. *IT*



*Becky Trickey with some of the older adults helped by the Goodwill Initiatives on Aging*

*Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a unique project that utilizes a community-building philosophy. More than 200 individual community volunteers have been recruited and trained to work with NHN, and over 50 Salt Lake area companies, businesses, and organizations have been recruited to help meet the needs of older adults. Approximately 700 students have completed service-learning requirements through the program.*

*Since the inception of the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program, approximately 525 low to moderate-income older adults have been assisted, allowing them to live independently in their own homes with dignity and quality of life.*