



March 2020

The Hotline

North Carolina Continuing Care Residents Association

www.norccra.org

BELLE MEADE TO HOST ANNUAL MEETING OF EASTERN REGION APRIL 7, 2020

The planning team has put together a truly informative meeting beginning with the keynote speaker, Dr. Karen Sullivan. Dr. Sullivan created the "I CARE FOR YOUR BRAIN" program which won the 2017 Leading Age North Carolina award for *Excellence in Collaboration*. Her presentation will draw on highlights from that series.

Dr. John Dempsey, President of the Sandhills Community College since 1989, will talk about the importance of continuing education for senior citizens and the ongoing collaboration between St. Joseph of the Pines (Belle Meade and Pine Knoll) and the college. Dr. Dempsey is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and holds a master's degree in Government from the College of William and Mary as well as a PhD from UMass in Political Science. During his tenure the college has grown dramatically and become nationally renowned for its medical

and developmental education programs.

Margaret Lorenz, Attorney-at-law of the Lorenz & Creed Law Firm in Southern Pines, will discuss the importance of keeping end of life planning up to date, drawing from her practice in Elder Law and her personal experiences in the past. Mia, as she is known by her friends, is a 1993 graduate of the Wake Forest School of Law and a 1989 graduate of the College of William and Mary.

Meeting starts at 9:30 am, ending by 2:30 pm.



Belle Meade, Southern Pines NC

See page 4 regarding registration for this meeting.

President's Message.....*by Wayne Campbell*

You may be reading this in March but I am writing this column in January, and my thoughts are filled with reflections of NorCCRA in 2019 – accomplishments and disappointments. We ended 2019 with the largest membership in recent years, or maybe ever. A big thank you goes to the Community Representatives for this accomplishment, and to those of you who joined. Thank you for seeing the value of NorCCRA membership, and for your commitment to this organization as it continually strives to promote optimal quality of life for residents of North Carolina's CCRCs.



NorCCRA's operating/fiscal year is October-September. I know that some CCRC's Residents Associations operate using the calendar year. That means that effective on January 1st, there were a few changes in Community Representatives. Please join me in thanking those who served as Community Representatives in 2019, and welcome their replacements who are beginning their journeys in this significant way with NorCCRA. I can't say it enough, NorCCRA would not exist as we know it today without the efforts of these individuals.

Here we are in the year 2020 – a new year – a new decade – and new opportunities. We have a fresh start and a new beginning. Some ways to make it better, working together, are:

Membership: If you have yet to renew your membership, please do so immediately! Better yet, consider joining as a Life Member which helps stabilize our membership total and gets you out of the annual membership renewal cycle. NorCCRA needs you, and I believe that every resident of a CCRC needs NorCCRA.

Stand ready to act when NorCCRA puts out a plea through your Community Representative to write letters to your legislative representatives (Federal and State). The purpose of NorCCRA is to advocate for strong laws, regulations and general practices for the protection and well-being of residents of NorCCRA. Our network of members are among the largest voting population in North Carolina, and are typically among the largest donors. Working together with a common voice gets the attention of our legislators. We saw this happen a few years ago when we lobbied (mostly with a letter-writing campaign) and successfully decreased the income threshold for medical deductions from 10% to 7.5% for federal and state taxes.

By the time you are reading this, you will have probably heard and (hopefully) participated in a letter-writing campaign to oppose a proposed rule by the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that could significantly impact CCRCs, and affect the NC General Assembly's ability to oversee how it administers its current nursing home bed tax program. Under current North Carolina law, skilled nursing home beds within a continuing care retirement community settings are exempt from North Carolina's nursing home bed tax. The financial impact to NC's CCRC communities would result in millions of dollars a year in new taxes, which, if made into law, would most likely raise monthly fees and/or levy special assessments of residents to cover the costs of the new taxes.

We say, "We can do more together, than we can do alone." ACT AS IF WHAT YOU DO CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE IT DOES!

Thanks and blessings,

... Wayne

2020 CENSUS - *Everyone Counts!*

The 2020 US Census count will have far reaching impacts for all North Carolinians. Every ten years, the United States counts everyone who lives in the country, from newborn babies to the oldest among us.

WHAT IS THE DECENTNIAL CENSUS?

The United States began conducting a census of population and housing in 1790. The US Constitution mandates an apportionment of representatives among the states for the House of Representatives every 10 years. Apportionment is the process of dividing the 435 seats in the US House among the 50 states. By law, the US Census Bureau must deliver a report of population counts to the president of the United States within 9 months of Census Day. Census Day is April 1, 2020. The report will provide the population counts by state and the number of seats in the US House of Representatives apportioned to each state. Redistricting data will be released by April 1, 2021.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

A complete count of every person living in the US has tremendous benefits for you and your community. Census data:

- Accurately determines how many representatives each state has in Congress and inform the redrawing of congressional district boundaries. North Carolina stands to gain a seat in the US House of Representatives, along with the Electoral College votes that NC holds in presidential elections. State redistricting is also based on census data, which means that the accuracy and fairness of the drawing of NC legislative maps is dependent on getting a complete count.

- Are used as the basis for allocating more than \$675 billion in federal funds annually to states, counties, and communities, including money for first responders, Medicare Part B,

supportive housing for the elderly, libraries and community centers, and hospitals. It means an average of \$2,000/year per resident for 10 years.

- Inform business decisions, policy, community initiatives, and consumer advocacy. Businesses use census data to decide where to build factories, offices and stores, which create jobs. Real estate developers use the census to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.

HOW AND WHEN CAN YOU RESPOND?

Beginning in mid-March 2020, households will receive an invitation in the mail to respond. For the first time ever, the US Census Bureau will accept responses online and by telephone. You can still complete the census by mail. Invitations will be delivered by the US Postal Service in staggered deliveries over several days. Areas that are less likely to respond online will receive a paper questionnaire along with their invitation. There are only nine questions and responding should take less time than it takes to finish your morning coffee.

Nonresponse follow up will begin in early April. If you have not responded, reminder postcards will be sent out, followed by a reminder letter and questionnaire. If you still have not responded by the end of May, census takers will go door to door from June through July 2020.

There are special procedures to count people who live in a group facility, like a skilled nursing or assisted living facility, dorm, military barracks, or shelter. For these facilities, US Census Bureau employees will work with a representative from the building to make sure you are counted.

IS YOUR DATA SAFE?

Strict federal law protects your census responses. Your answers can only be used to produce

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ECOLOGICAL *Sustainability* Meteorology vs. Climatology

Meteorology is a science. It is the study of the principles of atmospheric physics and chemistry and how they affect global weather. The better we understand the basic inputs and outputs of energy acting on the chemical milieu of the global atmosphere, the better we can predict weather.

Climatology is the historical study of weather. Current mathematical models of past weather are being used to predict future weather. The predictability of some global weather models is being improved by insertion of basic principles of physics and chemistry. However, one only needs to look at the accuracy of the predictions made by TV weather personalities to realize that historical weather-based models are unsatisfactory.

Predicting the movement of Hurricane Florence was a good example of the problem. We heard terms like "US Model", "European Model", and "WMO Model" to refer to various colored lines on the TV screen predicting the potential paths of

Florence as she wandered around the Atlantic Ocean keeping us in suspense.

The basic reason the available hurricane models are unsatisfactory is that they are primarily based on historical fact. If the concentrations of chemicals in the atmosphere change to levels not seen in the construction of current models, extrapolation into the new conditions is not going to work.

For predictability into a changing future, we must develop mechanistic climate models based on scientific principles.



Boyd Strain, PhD, a retired Professor of Ecology from Duke University, resides at Croasdale Village in Durham. His PhD, from UCLA, focused on plant physiological ecology. At Duke University he focused on increased carbon dioxide as a stressor on plants and ecosystems.

**NorCCRA Registration Eastern Region Annual Meeting
Tuesday, April 7, 2020
At Belle Meade, 100 Waters Dr, Southern Pines, NC 28387
9:30 am – 2:30 pm**

Please register me (us) for the NorCCRA Annual Meeting, April 7, 2020

Name(s) Please Print _____

CCRC Community _____

Email or Phone _____

Cost \$15 for registration and lunch. Unless your NorCCRA Community Representative is collecting the registrations to send as a group, mail this form and check made payable to NorCCRA to:

Woody Mason, 3 Barratts Chapel Ct, Durham, NC 27705

RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020

NOTE: Registration is Due March 5!

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Scam Awareness Toolkit at Carol Woods

Carol Woods Scam Watch Work Group is composed of resident volunteers and is jointly sponsored by the Carol Woods Resident Advisory Committees on Information Technology and Safety & Security. The Work Group uses the concept of "Sentinel" which promotes recognition, responding and reporting. The workgroup is charged both with monitoring the status of scams among residents and ensuring that staff have the resources needed to deal with scams.

The workgroup is composed of four members:

- John Brantley, the work group leader, provides a monthly report to both committees.
- Jane Stein maintains the Scam Watch pages and the Carol Woods eBulletin Board at carolwoodsonline.org. The pages provide links to scam and fraud alerts and remedies from government agencies (Federal Trade Commission, NC Dept. of Justice, NC Attorney General, US Postal Service, Senior Medicare Patrol), and senior citizen advocacy agencies (AARP Elder Watch, Consumer Reports).
- Thad Monroe has developed a resource Toolkit of information and advice for dealing with scams and fraud for NorCCRA members through the Carol Woods website at
<https://tinyurl.com/v7laorm>
- John Poparad monitors and forwards advice from news media (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, TV News) and professional advisors.

The work group and Carol Woods Security Staff regularly compare reports from residents and prepare warnings about scams on telephones and cell phones, the internet, paper mail, and email via posters located on main bulletin boards throughout all units. Bulletin board postings deliver eye-catching images of scams and encourage residents to report scams to staff and security services. Threats that are known to be circulating may appear in the weekly *Friday*

Memo and may be reported on in meetings of staff and residents. Campus staff are informed through training sessions to forward concerns to the security office.

Residents have reported well known scams such as "Help Me Grandpa", and "You Won the LOTTERY", and national security threats such as the Equifax Breach, Medicare Card Threats, and the Facebook Hack. A poster is made for each alert and an article appears in the Scam Watch section of Carol Woods Online that explain it and is linked to the best ways to deal with the threat. Attention is focused on scams that potentially target senior citizens and CCRCs.

One such scam that emerged recently on campus involved scam calls from "The Health Center", prompting Health Center staff to announce their calls with "Carol Woods Health Center".

The Sentinel model promotes active reporting by victims to both national and state government agencies. When government advice about precautionary steps such as "financial freezes" is given, residents are informed by notices and presentations. Government representatives such as the NC Attorney General have come to campus to inform residents of the ways in which state government provides aid and assistance to our population.

Thanks to John Brantley, Sindy Barker, and the team at Carol Woods for this article

The Hotline
Seeking Local Reporters! YOU!!!
Send articles, ideas, photos to
NorCCRA's Director of
Communications Margaret Zircher
zircher@me.com



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE from *Cindy Barker...*

Just in time for the holiday season, Congress passed the budget bill and the president signed it into law thus ending the threat of another government shutdown. For those of us living in CCRCs, the budget bill also retained the 7.5% Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) threshold on medical deductions for the 2019 and 2020 tax years. In the summer, the NorCCRA Legislative Committee sent letters to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee asking them to retain the 7.5% of the AGI until 2025. Throughout the fall, we heard that the billions of dollars that would be generated by increasing the percentage to 10% of AGI was sorely needed to balance the budget which gave us little hope that the 7.5% would hold.

In early December, we forwarded a message from LeadingAge NC asking us to contact our two Senators and Congressman to maintain the 7.5% of the AGI. And those letters (along with coordinated efforts of residents in other states) worked. When the budget was passed and signed into law on December 20, the 7.5% was maintained. Also in December, two bills were introduced in the Senate to permanently address this issue. The first, **S3001, Permanent Relief for Seniors and Medicare, Medicaid, Human Services Extension Act**, was introduced by Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA). One of the provisions would permanently allow individuals who are 65 and older to deduct certain medical expenses that exceed 7.5% of their AGI. A second bill, **S3129, Lower Costs, More Cures Act of 2019**, would both lower prescription drug prices and would amend the tax code to permanently reduce the AGI threshold to 7.5%. Section 301 of S3129 is entitled Permanent Extension on Medical Expense Deduction Floor. It amends an earlier law by striking 10% and inserting 7.5% and would apply after December 31, 2018. Both bills have been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

State Exemptions for CMS Bed Tax

The US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) have published a proposed rule which would allow no exemptions to the bed tax on skilled nursing home beds. The current rules allow a state to make exemptions to that rule, and the North Carolina legislature has chosen to exempt skilled nursing beds in CCRCs from the bed tax. There are 13 other states who have exemptions for CCRCs. If the proposed rule is adopted, North Carolina will no longer be able to have exemptions and will need to repeal the one related to CCRCs within a year. Several CCRCs have responded by holding letter writing sessions for all residents. For example, Glenaire delivered 199 letters to Senator Burr's office.

What does this mean for North Carolina CCRCs? The bed tax of \$13.68 is a per night tax on occupancy in a skilled nursing bed. Each CCRC keeps records of how many bed nights have been spent in skilled nursing beds. For example, Carol Woods has 30 skilled nursing beds. In 2019, there were 7691 nights in skilled nursing beds. Without the legislature giving exemptions to CCRCs, Carol Woods bed tax for last year would have been \$105,212. Pennybryn has many more skilled nursing beds. They had 42,342 bed nights and their tax would have been \$579,238. Obviously, the impact is going to be tremendous for CCRCs if we are unable to continue the exemption.

LeadingAge NC is asking all member CCRCs to provide the number of bed nights which have been spent in skilled nursing beds in their facility for 2019. By the end of January, they had received 27 responses. Based on information extrapolated by the provided data, the total impact for North Carolina CCRCs could be as high as \$19 million. Looking at figures from states that do not provide exemptions for CCRCs, the tax burden to individual North Carolina CCRCs would average approximately \$100,000 to \$1 million a year.

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Best Practices... from Carol Woods in Chapel Hill

Compassionate Companions

The VIGIL CORPS was created by the Companion Corps (a service committee at Carol Woods) to support staff in their efforts to ensure that no resident is alone in the final hours of their life. Vigil Corps volunteers, all residents of Carol Woods, are present at a most sacred moment in time, in gratitude and with humility. We are there to be a comforting companion and to be silent in the face of the unknown, as the breath wanes and the body is released. We learn how to create a healing environment and how to be a compassionate presence for a resident who is *actively dying*. (*Actively dying is defined by health care providers and suggests that death will likely occur within 24-72 hours.*)

The initial training for Vigil Corps volunteers is adapted from the *No One Dies Alone* (NODA) training curriculum first developed by a nurse in Oregon over 15 years ago. The training provides information on the emotional, spiritual and physiological aspects of the end of life. Twelve resident volunteers were trained in 2017 and eight in 2018. All volunteers take part in ongoing training and post vigil processing.

At Carol Woods, the staff determines when and if a vigil will be called, based on the criteria established in the Vigil Corps protocol. Although circumstances surrounding each death are unique, a vigil is typically called when support is needed to ensure that the resident will not be left alone in their final hours. Sometimes a resident has no living family members or family is not able to be at their bedside. On other occasions, family or friends may request that Vigil Corps volunteers be present for a time to provide an opportunity to step away with the assurance that their loved one will not be alone. Of course the resident, the resident's family, or

the resident's Health Care Power of Attorney must approve the presence of Vigil Corps volunteers.

In addition to offering our presence at the end of life, Vigil Corps volunteers also offer a workshop, *Walking Each Other Home*, to the entire Carol Woods community. While not Vigil Corps training, this workshop is designed to increase the comfort and compassion of residents as they accompany others through serious illness and/or the last chapter of their lives. This is a three-part (six-hour) small-group workshop that shares information on listening and communicating, explores personal experiences with the deaths of others, examines feelings about our own deaths, and covers how to comfort someone at the end of their life. The response to this workshop has been very positive, with requests that it be offered on an ongoing basis. Below are some comments offered on evaluations:

- All parts of this workshop were helpful
- I feel privileged to have been a part of this
- Expansive and enriching experience
- I have learned so much from this workshop—exposing me to questions and answers that I have wanted to know about for a long time
- Difficult topic, but thank you for putting it all on the table
- I learned a lot—especially about listening

For more information about either the **Vigil Corps** or the **Walking Each Other Home** workshop, please contact:

Beth Schultz email: bspwp83@gmail.com

Thanks to Beth Schultz & Paul Popish for this article.

Scotia Village Polar Plunge

Capitalizing on the failure of the Scotia Village pool heater, several residents and the Wellness Director decided a polar plunge into the unheated pool by the hardiest residents and staff was in order. To clarify, this event was not designed to compete with the Annual Myrtle Beach Polar Plunge or the Portland, Maine St. Patty's Day plunge into 34 degree Atlantic Ocean water. Due to circumstances, there was little time for resident notification or preparation. Eight hardy souls

showed up for the New Year's Day event. With little fanfare, the mid-60s to 94-year old participants dove, jumped, or otherwise entered the water which was hovering near 70 degrees. Some remained in the water to swim or play water volleyball, and some immediately retreated to the functioning hot tub.



"A great time was had by all!" It is unclear if there is a plan to sabotage the pool heater next year in order to have a 2021 Scotia Village 2nd Annual Polar Plunge.

Census, cont'd from p 3

statistics. It is against the law for any Census Bureau employee to disclose or publish any census information that identifies an individual. Census employees take a lifelong pledge of confidentiality, with penalties for wrongful disclosure of up to \$250,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years, or both. The Census Bureau has a cybersecurity program that incorporates industry best practices and federal security standards for encrypting data. The Census Bureau will never ask for Social Security numbers, bank or credit numbers, money or donations, or anything on behalf of a political party.

You can learn more about the 2020 Census by visiting 2020census.gov.

*Thanks to Martha Roblee at Scotia Village
for this article.*

To join one of NorCCRA's Forums:

- Sustainability
- Board of Directors
- Residents Council Presidents

email NorCCRA's Communications Director, Margaret Zircher zircher@me.com, with your name, community, and forum you wish to join.



Application for membership in North Carolina Continuing Care Residents Association

Name: _____ Community: _____

Spouse's name (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Fee: \$12 for individual; \$20 for couple; \$80 individual life membership; \$135 life membership for a couple

Please make check payable to **NorCCRA**. Give your check and application to your local NorCCRA rep.

Otherwise, mail to Susan Rhyne, 3913 Muhlenberg Court, Burlington NC 27215

Thank you.