



Senior LIFESTYLE

A Publication by Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services

WINTER 2008

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From the Interim Director, Mr. Bart Banks



I want to take this opportunity to share our new and improved newsletter, *Senior Lifestyle*, which was designed especially for you. This is just another example of how Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services strives to improve the quality of services. On behalf of all of our staff, I want to wish you all a great 2008.

Bart Banks

NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS POLICE/FIRE/MEDICAL

Hillsborough County Sheriff.....	247-8200
Hillsborough County Fire/Medical	272-5665
Tampa Police	231-6130
Tampa Fire/Rescue	232-6800
Temple Terrace Police ...	989-7110
Plant City Police	757-9200
Florida Highway Patrol	632-6859
Tampa International Airport Police	870-8760
University of South Florida Police	974-2628
Poison Information Center	1-800-222-1222
Hurricane Information..	272-6900
Animal Services.....	744-5660
Health Department	307-8000
County Information	272-5900



Special Break For Seniors

Once you turn 65 years of age, Hillsborough County offers a senior citizen discount to homeowners on your Solid Waste Annual Disposal Assessment.

To qualify for the senior citizen discount, you must own and live in the residential unit you list on the application form and be a resident in unincorporated Hillsborough County. The reduced fee is reflected every year, in November, on your Ad Valorem Tax Bill.

A single family homeowner will save \$21.36 and the savings for condo owners is \$16.02 per year.

You can obtain the application form at the Solid Waste Management Department at County Center, 601 East Kennedy Boulevard, 24th floor, or call the Solid Waste Department at 272-5680. Staff will gladly assist you in completing the form. You must apply on or before August 1, 2008 to receive the discount on your annual billing cycle in November 2008. You only need to apply for the discount one time.

Property Tax Relief for Seniors

Hillsborough County Commissioners voted unanimously in October 2007 to provide property tax relief to low-income seniors. Seniors with an annual household income of roughly \$24,214 or less will qualify for the extra \$15,000 homestead exemption. The exemption goes into effect in fiscal year 2008. The total senior exemption for low-income residents is now \$40,000, an amount that will grow in future years as the millage changes.

Seniors who qualify will receive a reduction in their tax bill of about \$260. If you previously had the exemption in 2007, you will receive a renewal notice in the mail. Seniors must apply for the exemption and provide proof of income.

Call the Property Appraiser's Office at 272-6100 for more information or to request an application.



Alzheimer's Caregivers Find Support Online

Written by guest contributor Brittany Rajchel

Jose Rodriguez often gets up at 2 a.m. Sometimes, it's because of his wife. She has Alzheimer's disease and requires a lot of his attention. Other times, he wakes up to the phone ringing. That is because Rodriguez serves as a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear and wise words of advice for caregivers all over Florida — caregivers who seek him out because he speaks their language.

Based out of Miami, he is partnered with the University of Florida's **AlzOnline.net** to provide no-cost telephone support groups for Spanish speakers all over the state who care for family members and loved ones living with Alzheimer's disease or progressive dementia.

"I'm a very, very light sleeper," he said, laughing. Most of the time, however, Rodriguez talks with caregivers like himself during daylight hours, when his wife goes to adult day care for the afternoon. In his weekly teleconferences, approximately ten Floridians call a number and type in a password that connects them with each other to discuss their lives as caregivers on a weekly basis.

"We just share our worries, we talk about our problems. We just connect," Rodriguez said. **AlzOnline.net** works to provide caregivers, especially those whose primary language is Spanish, a way to find help and instruction through Internet chat rooms, telephone support and education.

Rodriguez said **AlzOnline.net** gave him a resource to find helpful hints about caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia. For example, he remembers struggling to give his wife, whom he has cared for since 1999, a bath. She frequently got soap on her face, causing her eyes to sting and making the rest of her bath very difficult. Through his **AlzOnline.net** support group, Rodriguez learned that using baby shampoo keeps her eyes from getting irritated.

"Each Alzheimer's patient is a like a fingerprint because they are all different," he said. "But some stuff? It's the same. Like how to wash a person. Those little tricks nobody taught you? You can get those from talking to other people who have lived it."

Resources for Spanish-speaking caregivers are a must, according to the Alzheimer's Association, as by 2050, the association predicts there will be 1.3 million elderly

Hispanic patients living with the disease. In addition, a 2004 study by the Alzheimer's Association confirmed that Hispanics care for family members with Alzheimer's and dementia for longer periods of time and at higher levels of impairment, placing a much larger burden on the caregiver themselves.

AlzOnline.net tackles the problem by providing no-cost bilingual therapists, social workers and the insight of experienced caregivers, like Rodriguez, to help those who may be restricted by language and family responsibilities.

"Faced with the reality of caring for someone with a memory problem, a family's life changes forever," said Jeffrey Loomis, coordinator of **AlzOnline.net** and Associate Director of the Center for Telehealth at the UF College of Public Health and Health Professions. "We want to provide information, education and support to primary caregivers, whether they speak Spanish or English. We don't want language to be a barrier to finding the resources needed to be successful in caring for someone with a memory problem."

Talking to other Spanish-speaking caregivers can also be very comforting, Rodriguez said. Most Hispanic caregivers are taking care of immediate family members. They are intense caregivers, Rodriguez said, because of the importance the Hispanic culture places on staying close to family. Rodriguez, who was born and raised in Cuba, said he recognizes this in himself.

"We don't like to let go of our family members," he said. "Once we're together, we're together. We're attached." The support group also helps its members break away from traditional gender roles. Men, for example, often receive cooking advice, Rodriguez said.



"When my wife became diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I had to start doing the cooking," he said. "I didn't know what I was doing. My first time in the kitchen, oh, it was a big problem. And the laundry, the washing machine. It was so confusing. I didn't know which buttons to push or how to even buy detergent."

In turn, women get help figuring out the finances. Many of them have never balanced a checkbook, he said. Sometimes, the group speaks with Spanish-speaking therapists or doctors who give them useful information. And sometimes, they just encourage each other to go to the gym, buy healthy groceries and "live happier," so they can be around long enough to take care of their family members, Rodriguez said.



Sodium: A Salty Subject

What Is Sodium?... Sodium is an essential mineral our body needs to maintain good health that is found naturally in foods.

Our Bodies Need Sodium:

The National Institutes of Health and American Heart Association recommends less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium per day (equals 1 tsp salt) to:

- Maintain proper fluid balance—controlling the movement of fluids in and out of our cells
- Regulate blood pressure
- Transmit nerve impulses
- Help your muscles, including your heart muscles, to contract or relax

Sodium in Excess:

- An Average Adult consumes 4,000-6,000 milligrams of sodium per day (more than 2 times what is recommended)
- If you are healthy your body will get rid of any extra sodium through sweat and urine
- In Kidney Disease extra sodium isn't secreted; causing swelling

Sodium and High Blood Pressure:

- High blood pressure, or hypertension, is the major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure.
- It affects about 1 in 4 American adults!!!
- For those who have blood pressure that is salt sensitive: consuming too much sodium contributes to high blood pressure.

Adjust Your Diet to Eat These Foods:

Less Often

- Table Salt
- Processed Foods
- Pre Mixed Seasonings
- Frozen & Canned Foods

More Often

- No Added Salt
- Reduced Sodium
- Herbs and Spices
- Fresh Produce



Tips For Staying Safe When Bicycling Or Walking Near Roads

Florida is a great place to be outside, and enjoy the weather and scenery. We want everyone to be safe, so here are some important tips to keep in mind when walking and bicycling near traffic.

- When out at night and near roads, wear light-colored clothing and use reflectors or reflective materials to help drivers see you.
- When riding a bicycle in the road, ride in the same direction as traffic. When walking, do the opposite and walk facing traffic.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes.
- Don't assume that drivers see you or know when to stop. Always make eye contact with a driver before crossing an intersection or changing lanes.
- Please cross the street safely when walking. One-third of all pedestrians are killed because they crossed a street or intersection in a dangerous manner. For example, cross at intersections and remember to stop at the curb, then look both ways constantly as you cross.
- If you ride or walk on the sidewalk, watch carefully for vehicles pulling out of driveways and parking lots.

These tips brought to you by the Hillsborough County Public Works Department.

WHEN CALLING 9-1-1 FROM YOUR CELL PHONE

PULLOVER Don't put yourself and others at risk

KNOW YOUR CELL NUMBER In the event your call is interrupted, 9-1-1 can call you back

KNOW YOUR LOCATION Give address, use landmarks, crossroads or mile markers

STATE YOUR EMERGENCY Tell 9-1-1 what the problem is and exactly what happened

You may need to be transferred to the appropriate responding agency

DON'T HANG UP Be ready to give details, confirm information and follow instructions



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Department of Aging Services
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., 25th Floor
Tampa, FL 33602
Phone: 813-272-6630
Fax: 813-276-6862
www.hillsboroughcounty.org/aging

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Bart Banks, Acting Director

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From the RSVP Manager, Ms. Tracy Schwiers



As a new member of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) team, I would like to share with you a little bit of my background. I was born in New Jersey and spent my early years in the Northeast, but my family moved to Boca Raton, Florida where I attended middle and high school. I received my Masters Degree in Gerontology from the University of South Florida in 2000. I began working with Hillsborough County's Department of Aging Services as a temporary employee with the Case Management program, and have since worked with the In-Home Services program and now as RSVP Manager. I am so excited to have the opportunity to work with such a diverse, talented, and giving group of volunteers. One of the most valuable things we can contribute is our time, and so I want to thank you all for the time you give to this program and the agencies that you volunteer with. I wish you all a great 2008!

For more information on how to get involved as a volunteer, call (813) 276-2936. A list of volunteer opportunities is available online at <http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/aging/>

2007 Fall Festival - Dancing Through the Decades

This year's Fall Festival, held at the University Area Community Center on November 8, was themed "Dancing Through the Decades." Over 500 seniors from across Hillsborough County attended. Seniors competed in dance contests for fabulous prizes and even participated in an intergenerational hip-hop competition. About 20 high school students from Bowers/Whitley Culinary Career Center came to serve lunch and visited with the seniors.

Nathan Burton provided live musical entertainment, sponsored by the Hillsborough County Arts Council, and enticed seniors to sing along to popular favorites. A salsa dancing demonstration by Simone Salsa Dance Studio drew a crowd onto the dance floor. The excitement peaked during line dancing with a balloon drop. Everyone had a great time at this wildly successful event!

