

AGING TODAY

VOL. XXXI, No. 1

PAGE 1

January–February 2010

ISSN: 1043-1284

www.agingtoday.org

ASA: Uniting Community to Build Healthier, Happier Futures for Elders

By CYNTHIA STUEN

As we entered the year 2000, even the most prescient of pundits could hardly have predicted the cataclysmic and historic events of the 21st century's first decade. Now, as we embark upon the next 10 years, the physical, cultural, social and economic ground we traverse is, literally and figuratively, unsteady beneath our feet. From the heartbreaking tragedy of the earthquake devastation in Haiti, and the still-shaky state of national and international economies, to the volatile, uncertain outcomes of two ongoing wars and the battles over health reform, the immediate outlook in the infancy of year 2010 seems grim.

THE POWER OF COMMUNAL FORCE

We all have heard, in this challenging first year of a new presidential administration, the often divisive ring of voices across the legislative aisle. Conflicting messages and often confusing conjecture about the state of our great union—messages fraught with both hope and fear—have been bruited in the halls of Congress, over the Internet and in the media.

This bombardment of information, especially with respect to health reform, has caused no small amount of founded and unfounded concern to America's citizens, especially older adults, who are ever increasingly coming together in "tea party" protests, town halls and other political, social and civic community actions. Though sometimes unsettling to witness and participate in, this turn of events is, to my mind, a heartening trend. For no matter which "side of the aisle" you are on, there is energetic power in communal force, in coming together to take action, argue, debate and—in the process—educate each other.

At this writing, we have just heard the first State of the Union address from President Obama. While acknowledging our nation's struggles of the past year, he declared that "despite our hardships, our union is strong. We do not give up. We do not quit. We do not allow fear or division to break our spirit."

It is clear from his words that the way through to successfully meeting America's current challenges, of which healthcare reform is only one on a daunting list, is by working together, in unity, across parties, across philosophical differences and across varying agendas. We must bring down the divisions and the "deficit of trust" that erodes our common humanity.

Responding to this call for communion over the years ahead, ASA is progressing with a strong agenda that shows our dedication to the community of professionals in aging who we serve, and our advocacy on behalf of older Americans. Our firm belief in community as a force for enlightened change and education is the reason why this issue of **Aging Today** fo-

cuses much on the upcoming Aging in America conference in Chicago (see the “In Focus” section for a preview of the conference’s March 17 General Session, “The Aging of America: Triumph or Tragedy?” and for previews of the conference’s national forums on brain fitness, immigration, caregiving and business).

We want to meet you in Chicago to engage in discussion, debate and exchange of resources and ideas—activities that are crucial to your professional development and ability to support the older adults whom you serve.

EDUCATION CONNECTS COMMUNITIES

Our premier educational event, the 2010 Aging in America Conference, is fast approaching (if your ASA membership is current through March 19, 2010, you can take advantage of discounted member rates). The conference, from March 15–19 in Chicago, will tackle the critical and timely issues faced by professionals who work with older adults.

Key presenters include bestselling author Gail Sheehy; Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary; Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary of Aging; Dr. Robert Butler, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and head of the International Longevity Center; Dr. Ken Dychtwald, president of Age Wave; AARP president Jennie Chin Hansen and so many more. Visit www.agingconference.org for registration information, the conference agenda and sessions.

As well, it’s not too early to plan for the ASA East Coast Regional Conference, which will take place from September 13–17, 2010, in Philadelphia. Be sure to check the ASA website for coming news on the conference agenda and sessions.

The ASA Online Learning Communities are going strong with an all-new lineup of web seminars planned for 2010 (the Online Learning Communities site and web seminars are a free benefit for ASA members). These communities offer access to other ASA members and their expertise, and allow you to share resources and best practices, learn from leaders in the field and participate in lively online discussions. Visit www.asaging.org, click on “Visit the ASA Learning Communities” and in no time you’ll be connected with your fellow ASA members. For a preview of our 2010 web seminars, go to www.asaging.org/webseminars.

The MindAlert web seminar series begins on Thursday, April 28, 2010, with “Senior Center without Walls,” a web seminar presented by Terry Englehart, director of the Senior Center without Walls, Episcopal Senior Communities, Oakland, Calif. The MetLife-sponsored MindAlert web seminars give you in-depth knowledge about successful cognitive fitness programs in place nationwide, and provide best-practice examples for use in your community. To attend, go to www.asaging.org/webseminars and select “MindAlert Free Live Webinars.”

UNITY—OUR STRENGTH FOR THE DECADE AHEAD

Whether you meet up with your ASA colleagues online or in person at our conferences, we hope that you will take full advantage of your membership in the ASA community. We offer you our warm wishes for the new year (and new decade) ahead and, as ever, want to hear from you about how we can best serve your needs as professionals in the complex field of aging (stay in touch with us at info@asaging.org).

The state of union, or community, is something we at ASA cherish and work to maintain: In the diverse mosaic of the aging community there is great strength, the power of individual and collective knowledge and the spark of unlimited potential and possibility. Let us continue to work and learn in concert, not divided by the pressing demands of the world upon our lives. United, we can create more stable, meaningful and healthier futures for the older adults we ever strive to serve. ❖