

In Karen Tobin's own words...

"Tax time is a great kick-off to remind the public that scams and con artists continue to be on the rise. As victims, exposure comes at our expense. Being vigilant in protecting our personal, financial, and tax information is a must. The old cliché "have I got a deal you won't believe," could be more true than ever imagined, and it may just be a deal you want to pass on. It is imperative that you understand the importance of safeguarding all personal information—especially your social security number—which, if stolen, "authorizes" the thief to make purchases or even take out loans in your name as if they were you!

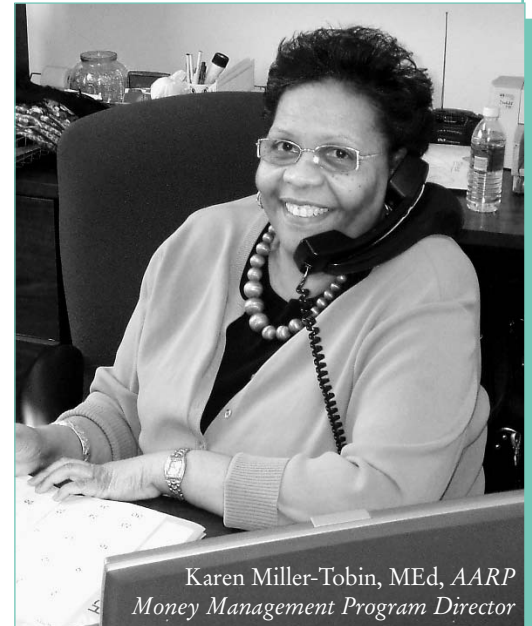
Don't be fooled that only the Internet is the highway to having your personal information circulated to predators waiting to destroy your financial security. A simple phone call that solicits personal information is equally destructive to you if you are unaware of the scam. Today, it is also very easy to counterfeit government contacts/stationary even going as far as duplicating very believable-looking logos.

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USS Staff to Present at Conference

Ursuline Senior Services' Money Management Program Director, Karen Tobin, will join two of her fellow colleagues through the AARP network to present at this year's National Council on Aging and American Society on Aging "Aging in America" Annual Conference being held in Washington, DC from March 26–30, 2008. The representatives from AARP will discuss the benefits of protecting older adults from financial crises and exploitation. Karen will take part in this presentation by using the knowledge and experience that she has gained through working with the clients enrolled in Ursuline's Money Management Program. Karen is pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the financial concerns that so many older adults are facing and hopes that she and her colleagues can provide more awareness to the issue.

In addition, Karen was recently selected to represent Allegheny County's Area Agency on Aging as a partner of the American Society on Aging's New Ventures in Leadership (NVL). NVL is



Karen Miller-Tobin, MEd, AARP
 Money Management Program Director

designed to promote the leadership potential of professionals of color and their involvement in the national aging arena. As a partner, Karen will have the opportunity to attend various educational seminars, participate in special projects and work with national and local mentors who will assist her to further develop and enhance her leadership skills. Karen is looking forward to traveling to Washington, DC this March, where she will be attending her first NVL educational seminar as part of the NCOA/ASA Annual conference. 

INSIDE...



Ann Mason is new director for Guardianship program

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Julie Donovan is new Training and Resource Coordinator

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Care Managers Expand Their Skills Thanks to New Training Coordinator

The training of new professionals, and the continuing education of current staff, is of extreme importance in the Community Based Options Department. While most new hires come to the agency with prior experience and a strong education, new care managers (CMs) have much to learn about specific services offered through Ursuline, computer programs used to document our activities, and skills to provide professional relationships with our consumers. Furthermore, established CMs continue to need information on the latest trends in aging and the newest programs and providers, as well as to constantly refresh their skills. To that end, Training and Resource Coordinator Julie Donovan owns the task of ensuring that everyone in the department gets the training they need to do the job right.

Julie joined Ursuline Senior Services as a care manager in November of 2003. After three years, Julie established herself as a professional with strong



TRC Julie Donovan (l) orients new CM Ronisha Harper on the use of the specialized computer program she will be using on the job.

interpersonal skills and the ability to manage her large caseload with great results. When one of the intensive care managers (ICMs) left for several months of maternity leave, Julie was a natural choice as temporary substitute. Julie took on the role and responsibilities of this new opportunity with eagerness and provided great care for her consumers until the ICM returned.

A few short months later, when the position of training and resource coordinator (TRC)

became available, Julie was excited to apply. The Community Based Options Department already established this position in the summer of 2004 to standardize the training process, which had become more elaborate and detailed due to a new social work computer system adopted by the state called "SAMS." Julie became the new TRC in October 2007 and has been working hard ever since to build upon the training process.

Training new CMs is one of Julie's most important tasks. A format had already been established to introduce new professionals to their position. First, Julie arranges for new CMs to "shadow" current staff on visits. Then the new CMs conduct the visit while a current CM accompanies them to supervise, answer questions, and give feedback. Eventually new CMs will receive in-office coaching prior to doing home visits by themselves, with their work closely monitored, and then

Training cont. on Page 7

Administrative Staff

Anthony J. Turo, MPA, *Executive Director*
William Brickner, MEd, *Director of Administration*
Sr. Michael Mack, OSB, MHA, *Finance Manager*
Ann Mason, MAT, MEd, *Guardianship Director*
Nancy Scott, BA, *Service Coordination Director*
Michelle Smart, MS, NPM, *Protective Services Director*
Karen Miller-Tobin, MEd, *Volunteer Programs Director*
Roxann Tyger, MPA, *Community Based Options Director*

all about **US** News & Updates from 
Ursuline Senior Services
Winter 2008

In addition to the administrative staff, the following staff assisted in the development of this newsletter:

Kathy Garland Richard Murphy Hillary Wile
Catherine Paladino Nadine Pcholinsky



Seeding the Future...

by Tony Turo
Executive Director

Over our past 25th anniversary year, Ursuline Senior Services has taken time to look back over the road we have traveled since our very beginnings. At the same time, the experience has provided us ample opportunity to focus on where we are going. The first step in that trip has been to reflect on our mission, which we did most recently as part of our strategic planning process several years ago. As a way to open this process for more reflection, I am dedicating this year's series of newsletter columns to "dissect"

our mission statement and further describe what we truly mean by the words we have chosen.

The first line of our mission states that Ursuline Senior Services is "dedicated to the highest standards of professionalism

and care." As a human services agency that relies on and partners with a variety of government and foundation funders to support the necessary services we provide, it is essential that those who underwrite us can count on our professionalism as much as those who rely on us for assistance. That is why we identified the principle of professionalism as one of the primary foundations of our mission. Coupled with that is "care," which reflects our underlying concern and compassion for the individuals

who turn to us for information, services or support of any kind. Based upon our Ursuline tradition, the heart of this non-profit human services agency remains kindness and consideration with which we approach each new opportunity to be of service.

These traits of professionalism and care are most evident in the human "tools" we use every day to reach out to those who come to us for help. You will meet several of them in this issue of *All About US*. In every program corner of the agency—from Karen Tobin in the Money Management Program to Julie Donovan in Community Based Options to our new Guardianship Program Director Ann Mason—our staff members help us shine in countless ways, all for the benefit of those we serve. Our promise of professionalism and care to those we serve remains strong after 25 years of service, and hopefully for many more years to come!

Taxes cont. from Page 1

This tax season familiarize yourself with "real deals" that you can not only believe, but trust. There is free tax help available for seniors. It is being offered by Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, also known as VITA. You can call 1-800-906-9887 to locate a VITA site close to you. There are many and some of them may be as close to you as your local library. Some require a scheduled appointment so please ask before arriving.

If you have questions or need information, Tax

Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) is a free service to help those over 60 years of age. In addition to these free services please note that AARP offers tax-aide counseling during the filing season and all you have to do to locate a site is call 1-888-227-7669 or visit the AARP website.


This tax season familiarize yourself with "real deals" that you can not only believe, but trust.

Where to Find Help...

VITA 800-906-9887
(Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)

TCE 800-829-1040
(Tax Counseling for the Elderly)

AARP 888-227-7669

In closing don't be unarmed when it comes to protecting what you have worked so hard to build. If you have doubts or questions, get familiar with contacting phishing@irs.gov or go to the official IRS website www.irs.gov. Remember, an ounce of PREVENTION is still worth a pound of cure!" 

Mason Builds on Experience in Guardianship Role

Ann F. Mason assumed the Program Director's chair for the Guardianship program on November 5, 2007. She comes from a very eclectic background in social service work. "I have always been a social service person, and I believe guardianship should not be just a paper service but a human service as well. I also believe in going above and beyond in keeping the family informed about their loved one when we are their guardian."



Ann F. Mason, MAT, MEd,
Guardianship Director


Ann grew up in Wisconsin and came to the Pittsburgh area to serve as a VISTA Volunteer (Volunteers in Service to America) in McKeesport, PA where she ran a nursery school in a public housing project. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, Ann later

received two Masters degrees from the University of Pittsburgh.

Besides working in human services in the Pittsburgh area, Ann taught for two years in the Pittsburgh Public School District and has had extensive background

in the juvenile justice system and in the anti-hunger arena.

"I am very familiar with Ursuline Senior Services and expect a smooth transition," Ann recently stated. "I see issues concerning the elderly as a growing field in general and in Western Pennsylvania in particular. I would like to see Ursuline Senior Services' Guardianship program expand even beyond the 11 counties where Ursuline serves now in Western Pennsylvania."


Ann was the recipient of the Pennsylvania Association for Volunteerism (PAV) Award for Excellence in 1987 and graduated from Leadership Pittsburgh Class XVII in 2001. Ann and her husband, Major A. Mason III, Ph.D., live in McKeesport. Their two adult children, Major IV and Arianna, live in Pittsburgh. 

PANO Seal of Excellence Within Ursuline's Reach

The Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO), a membership association of nonprofit organizations, has assumed a leadership role in adapting and implementing "Standards of Excellence," a comprehensive ethics and accountability program which assists individual organizational members across the Commonwealth to apply the standards to their own operations. The Standards of Excellence promote honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust and responsibility through review of a non-profit's mission, governing body, finances, policies and fundraising. Benefits of implementing these standards for

the agency are self-improvement, measurement of appropriate behavior, proactive problem-solving, safeguarding against improper behavior, affirmation of good work, recognition of accountability and honesty for donors. Ursuline Senior Services began this process in the fall of 2006 by attending a four-session clinic series. The clinic series provided educational support to assure the implementation of all the standards. The agency's application for certification was completed in the spring of 2007. Ursuline's administrative team, Board of Directors, staff and interns have been revising, reviewing and creating policies needed to

The Standards of Excellence promote honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust and responsibility.

complete the self-study portion of the process. Before Ursuline can be certified under the program, there will be an intensive review of our submitted documents, as well as site visits by PANO review team members. We hope that by the end of 2008 Ursuline Senior Services will have completed all requirements towards becoming an accredited agency through the Standards of Excellence program and receive the PANO Seal of Excellence. 



The other day a young person asked me how I felt about being old. I was taken aback, for I do not think of myself as old. Upon seeing my reaction, she was immediately embarrassed, but I explained that it was an interesting question, and I would ponder it, and let her know.

Old Age, I decided, is a gift.

I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be. Oh, not my body! I sometime despair over my body, the wrinkles, the baggy eyes, and the sagging butt. And often I am taken aback by that old person that lives in my mirror (who looks like my mother!), but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, my loving family for less gray hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become more kind to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend.

*I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so *avante garde* on my patio. I am entitled to a treat, to be messy, to be extravagant.*

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 AM and sleep until noon?

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 60&70's, and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love ... I will.

I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They, too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful. But there again, some of life is just as well forgotten. And I eventually remember the important things.

Sure, over the years my heart has been broken.

How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody's beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning gray, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be.

*And I shall eat dessert every single day.
(If I feel like it)*

— Author unknown

2008 Quality Improvement Plan

As part of an on-going effort to provide the highest quality of care management services to our consumers, Ursuline Senior Services is continuing to engage in a quality standards process with the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging. As a part of this process, each year, we develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to identify areas where growth and development will occur.

For this current year, the Community-Based Options (CBO) program has identified two areas in the QIP for development. These are:

Consumer Focused: Supporting consumers in directing their own strengths-based care.

For this target area, the CBO program will work with staff and consumers to provide the essential elements of strengths-based care management. This will involve developing ongoing trainings to staff on the Strengths-Based Approach (SBA), working with consumers to develop a SBA care planning tool, and developing and implementing surveys of consumers and Care Managers to obtain their feedback on our provision of the essential elements of the SBA.

Adaptability: Practicing crisis management.

In this area, the CBO program will provide training, support and tools for Care Managers to respond to an individual consumer crisis, or an aging, community-level crisis. The program will be working on developing protocols for certain crisis situations, to serve as a guide and tool for Care Managers. This will also include the development of disaster preparedness and response procedures, and a comprehensive behavioral health training curriculum for Care Managers.

Watch upcoming newsletters for further updates on our Quality Improvement Plan!

Ursuline Works to Provide Competitive Benefits to Staff

When most people think about benefits a job might offer, most tend to limit their thoughts to health care coverage and paid time off. However, for a job to be truly attractive to prospective employees, an employer has to offer benefits that are also unique. The same criteria holds true for retaining staff. Therefore, one way Ursuline Senior Services tries to separate ourselves from similar agencies is to offer what we believe is a very competitive as well as unique benefit package to our employees.

In an effort to maintain that position, Ursuline administrators met with a cross section of staff in early 2007 to examine current benefits and also discuss ideas for various enhancements. Almost all of the ideas discussed were brought to the table by staff. At

the end of the process, which took almost three months, several new benefits were rolled out to agency staff including: the ability to work from home one day per week or work a compressed schedule of four, ten-hour work-days; five extra vacation days for new parents; as well as a personal expense reimbursement plan that allows eligible staff to be reimbursed for certain expenses not typically covered by our health plan. In addition, new providers for our vision insurance and employee assistance program (EAP) were added to replace existing providers to offer a more comprehensive array of benefits to

the staff with virtually no increase in premium cost to the agency.


Ursuline Senior Services has been extremely fortunate to have hired many dedicated and caring staff members who share a commitment to help senior citizens in Allegheny County.

To assist new employees and current staff alike understand the value of their respective benefit packages, Ursuline's business office prepared a benefit statement for each employee in the spring of 2007. The statement broke down the cost of health care premiums paid by Ursuline, assigned a dollar value to their allotted paid time-off

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Benefits cont. from Page 6

benefit and, if applicable, considered the 401K match provided by Ursuline. Once complete, most staff found they were receiving a compensation package in the neighborhood of 25% to 34% over and above their annual salaries. Currently, Ursuline pays 100% for an eligible employee's health care coverage. What few people realize is the monthly premium Ursuline pays for an individual's health care has risen 127% between 1998 and 2008! Not many employers, profit or not, could or would be willing to sustain such an increase without participation by the employee to help offset the expense. However, it is very important to Ursuline's administration and its Board that this particular benefit be maintained to the staff for as long as possible. In fact, benefits are so important to Ursuline Senior Services that they are now an integral component of evaluation through the AAA Quality Improvement Process which was recently implemented in the Community Based Options Program to assist in the recruitment and retention of staff (see related article, page 6).

Since our inception as a social service agency in 1981, Ursuline Senior Services has been extremely fortunate to have hired many dedicated and caring staff members who share a commitment to help senior citizens in Allegheny County as well as a number of the surrounding counties in Western Pennsylvania. Our goal is to keep hiring and retaining dedicated individuals well into the 21st century by providing valuable and innovative benefits for them. 


Training cont. from Page 2

finally they are on their own – fully-trained and ready to take on the responsibilities of their caseload. The TRC coordinates this process and helps to decide when the trainees are ready to move through each phase of the process. She also provides classroom-style and one-on-one training in the office to teach the new CMs about the computer system and the programs we offer. Detailed training manuals had already been created, and Julie frequently updates them as processes and protocols change. She works closely with our AAA nurse consultant to ensure that the new employees have a good understanding of medical conditions and medications common in our elderly consumers. She also coordinates an agency orientation, so that new hires can meet administrators and program directors of each department and learn about all aspects of the services offered at Ursuline.

In addition to training the new care managers, Julie finds it very important that all staff continue to educate themselves about the issues surrounding the elderly in our community. She arranges in-service meetings so that groups such as banks, service vendors, social work agencies and therapists can provide their information to the whole department. She also searches for appropriate outside trainings and arranges for CMs to attend, with topics that include First Aid/CPR, suicide prevention, time management and organization. This winter, Julie was proud to facilitate a Crisis Prevention Training, which included representatives from

Allegheny County Emergency Services (ACES), who offered CMs examples of how to handle different crises and how to navigate the 302 commitment process. More recently, she coordinated a "Food Bank Field Trip," through which the CMs were able to tour the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank first-hand.

This spring and summer, Julie has planned a series of trainings centered on mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress, Alzheimer's disease, managing grief, and setting professional boundaries with consumers. She is also planning a series on interviewing skills. While these activities keep her very busy, Julie also sits on the AAA Quality Improvement Plan committee and monitors the progress of CMs as they complete and maintain their Professional Care Management Institute certification.

While training and maintaining the education of so many staff is a daunting task, Julie looks at her role with eagerness and excitement. She feels that the groundwork has already been laid for her position, and she is optimistic that she can continue to streamline and standardize the training process. She finds training to be rewarding, and enjoys being a mentor to our new staff. If you or someone you know has a new care manager at Ursuline, feel confident that they are receiving quality training by a TRC with enthusiasm and expertise. 

Ursuline

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In This Issue

Staff Highlights:

Meet new leaders and staff that add skills and compassion to Ursuline.

Ursuline Updates:

The latest reports on PANO, staff benefits and quality improvement at Ursuline Senior Services.

Taking Care of the Knee as You Age

Knee pain is the most common reason for visiting an orthopedic surgeon in America. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2003 there were 19.4 million visits made to physician's offices because of knee problems (from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons Web site, www.aaos.org).

The knee is the largest joint in the human body and can be injured easily, and as people age they may want or need to reduce stress on their knees. Here are a few recommendations from the

About Joints Web site (www.aboutjoints.com).

- Try to limit the number of trips you make up and down stairs.
- Remember to take a break. While you carry out your daily activities, sit down and take a rest whenever you feel like you need one.
- Avoid heavy housekeeping duties when possible, such as scouring the tub and scrubbing floors, for example.
- Avoid long periods of standing while you are cooking,

The knee is the largest joint in the human body and can be injured easily.

washing dishes, etc. If possible, sit down while you take care of these chores.

- Avoid carrying and lifting heavy objects.
- Keep as many things as possible in a convenient location, so that you will not be required to bend and stretch in awkward ways as much.



www.ursulineseniorservices.org

Mission Statement— Ursuline Senior Services, dedicated to the highest standards of professionalism and care, promotes the dignity and well-being of the senior population by providing coordinated supportive services tailored to the changing needs of each individual.

Ursuline Senior Services' United Way Donor Designation Code: 281