

# Westmoreland County Area Agency On Aging **Inside Line**

## **JANUARY IS NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH, AN IMPORTANT TIME TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THIS SIGHT-STEALING DISEASE.**

Currently, more than 2.7 million people in the United States over age 40 have glaucoma. The National Eye Institute projects this number will reach 4.2 million by 2030, a 58 percent increase.

Glaucoma is called “the sneak thief of sight” since there are no symptoms and once vision is lost, it’s permanent. As much as 40% of vision can be lost without a person noticing.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable blindness. Moreover, among African American and Latino populations, glaucoma is more prevalent. Glaucoma is 6 to 8 times more common in African Americans than Caucasians.

Over 3 million Americans, and over 60 million people worldwide, have glaucoma. Experts estimate that half of them don’t know they have it. Combined with our aging population, we can see an epidemic of blindness looming if we don’t raise awareness about the importance of regular eye examinations to preserve vision. The World Health Organization estimates that 4.5 million people worldwide are blind due to glaucoma.

### **What is Glaucoma?**

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steals sight without warning. Although the most common forms primarily affect the middle-aged and the elderly, glaucoma can affect people of all ages.

Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. This nerve acts like an electric cable with over a million wires. It is responsible for carrying images from the

eye to the brain.

There is no cure for glaucoma—yet. However, medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss. The appropriate treatment depends upon the type of glaucoma among other factors. Early detection is vital to stopping the progress of the disease.

### **Regular Eye Exams are Important**

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the world, according to the World Health Organization. In the most common form, there are virtually no symptoms. Vision loss begins with peripheral or side vision, so if you have glaucoma, you may not notice anything until significant vision is lost.

The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is to get a comprehensive eye examination. Then, if you have glaucoma, treatment can begin immediately.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of blindness among African Americans. And among Hispanics in older age groups, the risk of glaucoma is nearly as high as that for African Americans. Also, siblings of persons diagnosed with glaucoma have a significantly increased risk of having glaucoma.

### **Risk Factors**

Are you at risk for glaucoma? Those at higher risk include people of African, Asian, and Hispanic descent. Other high-risk groups include: people over 60, family members of those already diagnosed, diabetics, and people who are severely nearsighted. Regular eye exams are

especially important for those at higher risk for glaucoma, and may help to prevent unnecessary vision loss.

The Glaucoma Research Foundation  
[www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org)

### **EYEGASSES AT A REDUCED COST**

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging operates a Vision Center located at Westmoreland Manor in Greensburg for county residents age 60 and older. The Vision Center is staffed by a licensed optometrist and offers cataract and glaucoma screenings. Eye exams are offered yearly.

A sliding fee scale, based on income, is used to determine your cost. There is no income limit, so everyone is encouraged to take advantage of this service. Costs start at \$45.00 which includes the eye examination and glasses. Frames include metal, plastic and rimless. Progressive (no-line) bifocals, Transition lenses, anti-reflective coating, tints and scratch-resistant coating are available. Monthly payments are accepted. For more information or to schedule your Thursday morning appointment, please contact the Area Agency on Aging at 724-830-4444 or toll-free 1-800-442-8000.



# PREVENT ISOLATION AND LONELINESS AS YOU AGE

As we age, circumstances in our lives often change. We retire from a job, friends move away or health issues convince us to eliminate or restrict driving. When changes like these occur, we may not fully realize how they will affect our ability to stay connected and engaged and how much they can impact our overall health and well-being.

We need social connection to thrive—no matter our age—but recent research shows that the negative health consequences of chronic isolation and loneliness may be especially harmful for older adults. The good news is that with greater awareness, we can take steps to maintain and strengthen our ties to family and friends, expand our social circles and become more involved in the community around us.



Having a social network that meets our needs means different things to each

of us. We hope that the information and resources in this publication motivate you to evaluate your situation and, if needed, take action to strengthen the relationships that matter the most to you. And don't forget—when you open up your world to new people, sharing your time, talents and wisdom, it's a win-win for you and your entire community.

## RESOURCES

The following national resources can provide a comprehensive level of support for older adults, including the homebound, who are struggling with isolation and loneliness.

**Westmoreland County  
Area Agency on Aging  
724-830-4444  
1-800-442-8000**

## ELDERCARE LOCATOR

The Eldercare Locator is the only national information and referral resource to provide support to consumers seeking assistance across the spectrum of issues affecting older Americans. **Through its**

**National Call Center (800.677.1116), which operates five days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET, and website (www.eldercare.gov),** the Locator serves as a trusted gateway for older adults and caregivers searching for information and resources which can be crucial to their health, well-being and independence.

## CONNECT2AFFECT

Connect2Affect is an online resource featuring tools and information to help evaluate isolation risk, reach out to others who may be feeling lonely and disengaged, and find practical ways to reconnect to community. It is for individuals, families and the community at large. Learn more at [connect2affect.org](http://connect2affect.org).

**AARP Foundation**



## Self-Assessment Checklist

I live alone.	YES	NO
I see or talk to my family members one or more times per week.	NO	YES
I see or talk to my friends one or more times per week.	NO	YES
I provide daily care or support to a family member or friend who needs assistance with everyday tasks (such as preparing meals, providing transportation and grocery shopping).	YES	NO
I generally have a ride or the transportation that I need to get where I want to go.	NO	YES
It is difficult or impossible to leave my home without assistance.	YES	NO
I feel that I make a meaningful contribution to the world or people around me.	NO	YES

## Self-Assessment Checklist (cont.)

On a weekly basis I participate in social activities with family/friends or attend organized group activities, such as church, cultural performances, group meals, exercise classes, support groups, etc.	NO	YES
I often feel that I lack companionship.	YES	NO
I often feel left out.	YES	NO
If I had a problem and needed help or advice, I know someone I could rely on.	NO	YES
If I had good news or an interesting story to tell, I know someone I could tell.	NO	YES
Within the past year I have suffered a major loss or change, like death of a loved one or retirement.	YES	NO

Total answers circled in left column:

### Scoring: 2

You are at risk for isolation, but by becoming aware of the risk factors, you can take steps to avoid becoming isolated.

### 3 or more

You may already be experiencing the negative consequences of isolation and would benefit from taking steps to reconnect and address the barriers that may be causing your isolation.



Connecting You to Community Services

## ROAD TO RECOVERY LIGHTENS ONE BURDEN FOR THOSE WITH CANCER

**Call 1-800-227-2345 for assistance**

Are you an individual with cancer who has trouble getting transportation to your treatments? The American Cancer Society's "Road to Recovery" program can help—at no cost to you. Their volunteer drivers provide transportation to and from treatment for people with cancer who do not have a ride or are unable to drive themselves.

Determining eligibility and setting up your rides is easy. Patients simply call **1-800-227-2345** and provide their information to a central operator, who will input your information into their system, where it's relayed to the local volunteer coordinator. She or he then matches the patient with a local volunteer.

Patients must be traveling to an appointment required to begin or complete cancer treatment, or to an appointment for complementary therapy during cancer treatment. Transportation cannot be provided for follow-up appointments after treatment has been completed. Patients must be ambulatory, able to walk unassisted to and from the vehicle, or have an accompanying caregiver to assist. Patients under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a legally responsible adult such as a parent or caregiver. A (4) four business day advance notice is required, not including the date transportation is needed.

Learn more, or find out how you can become a volunteer driver for Road to Recovery at <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/road-to-recovery>.

**If you need help paying your heating bill, or have a heating emergency...**

**LIHEAP MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU**

**Apply online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us)  
Important information about an Energy Assistance Program  
Statewide Toll-Free Hotline  
1-866-857-7095**



## COLD WEATHER SHELTERS ARE OPEN

The shelters will operate out of the Welcome Home Shelter in Greensburg and the Union Mission in Latrobe. They will open from 8 pm – 8 am on nights when the temperature is 25 degrees or colder.

The shelters will provide free food and lodging to anyone, including individuals and families, who are homeless or without adequate heat in their homes. Heating issues can arise at any time, and we are here to serve anyone in the community during their time of need. Those staying at the shelter will also receive referrals to additional services, depending on their circumstances.

### **Welcome Home Shelter**

(Entrance in the Alley)  
Greensburg PA 15601  
724-838-9133

### **Union Mission**

2217 Harrison Avenue  
Latrobe PA 15650  
724-539-3550

## EARN WHILE YOU LEARN: JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) at Westmoreland County Community College offers paid training for unemployed, job-willing residents who are 55-years-of-age and older, and who meet income eligibility guidelines. Public agencies, government offices, or 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations serve as training sites for program participants who can update skills and learn new skills while continuing their job search.

Positions are available throughout Westmoreland County, you can earn \$7.25 per hour, and average 20 hours per week. For more information, call Mimi Owens or Rebecca Dunn: 724- 925-4066 or toll-free 1-800-262-2103 extension 4066.

## ATTENTION CAREGIVERS

If you are involved in caring for a family member or friend, who has a health condition, long-term illness or disability, then we invite you to participate in a survey to assist the Westmoreland County Area Agency with developing programs to give support to current and future caregivers. Contact Peggy at 724-830-4446 or email at [pwien@co.westmoreland.pa.us](mailto:pwien@co.westmoreland.pa.us) to receive your copy of the survey. Thank you in advance for your help as we work together to meet the needs of people who care for others.



## YWCA TECHNOLOGY CENTER

The YWCA offers technology classes at their technology center located at 424 N Main Street in Greensburg. Some classes that will be offered January-May are; tablet, smartphone, computer classes, private tutoring, tech support and a technology Q&A session. There is a fee for the classes. Financial aid is available for most of the classes. For more information please call 724-834-9390.

## WESTMORELAND COUNTY AREA AGENCY ON AGING CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

The Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging extends an invitation to you to attend our monthly Caregiver Support Group Meeting. This support group provides an opportunity for caregivers to discuss their concerns, share their experiences and gain support and information from other caregivers. At some meetings, guest speakers are featured who discuss various topics that are of interest to caregivers. We encourage members of the support group to identify specific subject matter, and we will pursue a qualified speaker. The Caregiver Support Group meeting is held in the Parlor Room at the McKenna Center for Active Adults, 971 Old Salem Road, Greensburg, PA. The meeting is scheduled either the second or third Wednesday of each month from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. All caregivers are welcome to attend. RSVP's are preferred. Please call Milene Brennan at 724-830-1827 or toll-free 1-800-442-8000. The schedule for 2017 is as follows:

January 11, 2017	July 12, 2017
February 8, 2017	August 9, 2017
March 8, 2017	September 13, 2017
April 12, 2017	October 11, 2017
May 10, 2017	November 8, 2017
June 21, 2017	December 13, 2017



Westmoreland County  
**Area Agency  
On Aging**

Historic Troutman's Center  
200 South Main Street  
Greensburg, PA 15601

Presorted Standard  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Permit No. 4978

**Inside Line** Staff:

Michele Whiting-Zona, *Editor*  
Sharon Casario, *Production Assistant*

**Inside Line** is published quarterly by the Westmoreland County **Area Agency On Aging**, 200 South Main Street, Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601 (Phone 724-830-4444), the Westmoreland County Commissioners and the PA Department of Aging.

## THE ELDER ABUSE TASK FORCE

### Don't Be the Victim of a Check Scam!

Someone sends you a check or money order. They ask you to deposit it to your account and then wire-transfer them the money - minus a nice bonus for you, a "thank you" for helping out.

### Should You Wire Money to a Stranger?

U.S. Postal Inspectors hope you say: Absolutely not! The offer may sound like a nice deal, but - as usual - it's just too good to be true. The check you receive will be counterfeit. And you'll be out the money.

### How Does the Check Scam Work?

The "pitch" stays pretty much the same, but it may appear in various disguises:

- You're overpaid for an item you sold on the Internet and asked to wire-transfer back the extra dollars.
- You receive a check and notification that you've won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes. You're told to deposit the check, representing a portion of your winnings, and wire-transfer \$2,000 to \$5,000 back "to cover the taxes" so you can collect the rest of your winnings.
  - A work-at-home offer promises that, in return for depositing a money order or check to your bank account, you can keep a percentage of the money after wire-transferring the rest.
  - Someone in a chatroom asks you for a favor: Just cash their check and wire-transfer them the money.

### Regardless of the Pitch, the Result Is the Same:

The check or money order you receive for deposit will be a counterfeit. It will be returned to your bank unpaid, and the full amount will be deducted from your account.

### Who Is Responsible for Losses to Your Account?

You are responsible for any check or money order you deposit to your account. If it turns out to be counterfeit, or is returned unpaid for any reason, you are fully responsible for the loss.

### Why Did the Bank Allow You to Withdraw the Money?

Federal law requires banks to make deposited funds available within 1 to 5 business days. Just because you can withdraw cash from your account shortly after depositing a check or money order doesn't mean the item you deposited is valid. It can be weeks before a check or money order is discovered to be counterfeit and returned to your bank unpaid.

### Why Didn't the Bank Know the Check Was Bad?

Bank employees may not be able to determine whether or not an item is valid. Their job is simply to process your financial document

If you believe you've been victimized by a fraudster, contact your nearest Postal Inspection Service office by calling 1-877-876-2455.

