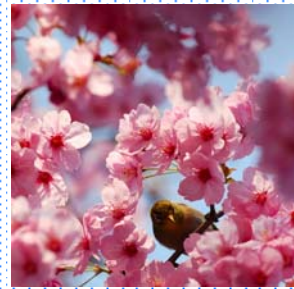


Link2Care

Spring/Summer 2009



A Publication of the Stanislaus County
Public Authority

Eye Care Basics



Taking Care of Your Vision Starts with Prevention

Did you know that there are over 1.1 million legally blind Americans, and common eye diseases are the cause of almost all cases of blindness in the United States? More alarming is the fact that 6.4 million new cases of eye disease occur each year. Many of these diseases are preventable and/or treatable if you know the basics about how to take care of your eyes.

Medical, Dental... Why Not Vision?

Very few people are able to name a sense they value more than their vision, but they often neglect to get the basic preventative eye care they need. In the same way that annual physicals and regular check ups with a dentist are crucial to maintaining overall physical and dental health, a regular eye exam is important in protecting one's vision. In addition to ensuring proper eyesight, regular eye exams allow your eye doctor to detect and treat diseases at the earliest possible opportunity. Many eye diseases manifest without causing initial discomfort or changes in vision and can occur at any stage in life. A good example is glaucoma - the most common cause of vision loss. Typically, glaucoma does not cause pain, and you don't notice a change in your vision at first. By the time your vision is affected, an eye doctor can only prevent it from worsening. Any vision loss prior to that diagnosis is irreversible.

Beyond the Eye Doctor's Office

While Doctors provide expert, professional eye care, several common sense tips can prevent eye injuries. Perhaps the most hazardous place for your eyes is your home. In fact, household products are the source of more than 32,000 serious eye injuries each year. Take these steps to prevent eye injuries in the home: Inspect and remove debris from lawns before mowing, do not mix cleaning agents, use guards on all power equipment, and wear protective eyewear when doing work around

(Continued on page 3)

In-Home Supportive Services Advisory Committee Members Needed!

Committee members make recommendations to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors about the In-Home Supportive Services program. By joining, you can help make a difference for the elderly and disabled members of our community.

The Committee meets the second Friday of each month, and is open to the public. Members are paid a \$30 stipend for each meeting they attend. Transportation is available. Call us at 558-4787 for more information on how to become a member.



Message from the Director

Normally I write about something new in the world of the In-Home Supportive Services Program, happenings at the Public Authority or the State Budget (or lack of one). But not this time. I can't take anymore, and I am sick and tired of the talk of recession, the California budget being billions of dollars out of balance and everything else that is bad in the world. Therefore, using all the powers delegated to me as the Link2Care Executive Director, I declare April 31st as National Good News Day!

On National Good News day all citizens will be required to say only positive and uplifting things. Compliments will rule the day. Just think how this could change your outlook on life and the day's events.

Instead of dwelling on the fact that your stock portfolio lost 35% of its value, think of how much less tax you will have to pay! Instead of "Holy #\$\$%&* I gained 10 pounds and need to go on a diet", think of it as a shopping opportunity. Instead of worrying about crashing the car into a tree, think of it as a way to get a new paint job. Instead of complaining about that nagging pain in your neck, think of all the other body parts that don't hurt.

Now in reality we can't just ignore bad news or pretend that everything is for the best, but it does make you wonder how much is really bad news and how much is perception. The next time you turn on the news and it is all doom and gloom, think about what is right. I have good health, a family that loves me, I am fortunate to have a job, etc. If you can turn the focus from bad to good you'll be surprised how much better you act and feel.

April 31



National Good News Day!

P.S. As I'm sure you know there are only 30 days in April, so if you treat this bad news like I've suggested treating all the other bad news, you still can have a great day!

Jeffrey M. Lambaren
Executive Director

www.StanLink2Care.org

The place to connect!

- IHSS Information
- Newsletters
- Resources and Web Links
- Insurance Information
- Contact Information and Maps
- Registry Information

The State Budget and You



This year, passage of the State budget was on everyone's mind. As the legislature struggled to find ways to make the budget work, many programs, including IHSS and Social Security, were in danger of seeing cuts. Now that the budget has passed, we are able to sort through the confusion and let you know how the Final Budget may affect you. We are delighted to report that there were no significant cuts to the IHSS program for Stanislaus County. There have been some modifications to the program, but IHSS Recipients and Providers in Stanislaus County should see no significant change in services or paychecks.

IHSS Recipients receiving Social Security may see some changes in the coming months. The State has already made the decision that the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that is typically seen in June will not be continued this year. This was one of the cost savings measures used to help balance the \$17 billion dollar deficit the State faced.



In addition to the above, the State is looking at the possibility of reducing the monthly amount given to SSI/SSP Recipients. When the State budget was passed, there were certain events that would "trigger" further cuts to the budget. One of these triggers was if the Federal Stimulus to the State General Fund was less than ten billion dollars. As of this writing, it appears the Stimulus package will only contribute approximately eight billion. This could potentially result in a cut of 2.3% to individuals receiving SSI/SSP. In real dollars, this would be a \$20 cut for individuals, and a \$35 cut for married couples.



For those of you on SSI/SSP don't despair! There is some good news. The Federal Stimulus package does allow for a \$250 one-time check to be sent to individuals currently receiving benefits. There is no action needed on the part of the Recipient. The Social Security Administration has stated they expect everyone who is entitled to receive payment to receive their check by late May 2009. The Social Security Administration will be posting more information about this one time payment on their website at www.ssa.gov/payment.

Eye Care Basics (Continued)


the house (regular eyeglasses may not offer the protection you need).

What About the Sun?

The sun produces two bands of harmful ultraviolet radiation (UV). UVB and UVA rays can burn the skin and damage the eyes. Sunglasses can protect your eyes from these damaging rays. And you don't have to buy top of the line sunglasses to protect your eyes effectively. Standards for sunglass lenses set limits on UVB and UVA ray exposure. For a product to be sold as sunglasses in the United States, they must block 99 percent of these rays. So, as a rule, sunglasses with UV protection labeling, whether they cost \$5 or \$500, will block 99 percent of the harmful UV rays.

To learn more about eye exams and eye care wellness, visit the EyeCare Discovery Center at www.vsp.com.

Caregiver's Corner



Link2Care has been receiving a lot of calls from Providers this quarter, asking questions we don't normally hear. Most of the questions were related to the Budget crisis, and how that impacted the IHSS program. We have compiled a list of some of these to help clarify what is real, and what is rumor:

The State says they might lay off employees. Am I in danger of losing my job?

No. Even though your paycheck comes from the State, the IHSS Consumer is your employer. Only an IHSS Consumer can hire or fire their IHSS Provider.

During the budget crisis, we were told IHSS benefits might be cut. Will there be a change for my Recipient or myself?

No. As of this writing, no major changes were made to the IHSS program. A huge thank you to all the Providers and Recipients who contacted their representatives and let them know how important the program is.

I heard Social Security benefits were cut. Is this true?

Sort of. While the State did not CUT benefits for recipients, they will not be giving the normal Cost of Living increase this year. For more information, see "The State Budget and You" article on page 3.

REAL?



OR RUMOR?

Can you afford to miss a pay period?

Have you recently had a timecard returned to you? IHSS payroll has been more stringent in returning timecards that are not properly completed. Next year, the way that timecards will be processed is changing, and the payroll staff are taking steps now that will help you have a smoother transition.

Your original timecard will be RETURNED to you if:

- It is received by IHSS early – timecards should NEVER be signed and submitted until AFTER all work has been performed.
- It is incomplete – missing daily hours, Recipient and/or Provider signature(s)

You will receive a REPLACEMENT timecard if:

- Your timecard is received with the top torn off – tear off the timecard at the perforated line between the pay stub and the new timecard
- You use white out – white out must NEVER be used
- You complete your timecard in pencil – use black or blue ink ONLY
- You marked over daily hours – small errors may be crossed out and corrected but MUST be initialed by the Recipient



Maria's Corner

Away for the Holidays

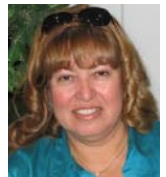
Elizabeth had been working for her Recipient for 3 years and they had a great working relationship. In December, Elizabeth's Recipient made a trip to the east coast to spend the Holidays with family. While her Recipient was there, she had a major health problem and had to extend her stay on the east coast. Elizabeth kept in touch with her Recipient and was excited when she returned home in early February. They agreed that she should start working for her right away.

In late February Elizabeth called me to report that she would not be paid for most of February because In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) said her Recipient's case had been closed and no one had advised them of her return. Elizabeth called me to ask how she could get paid for that time. Unfortunately, since the Recipient's case had been closed, there were no authorized hours for the provider, and IHSS was not responsible to pay for that time worked. Elizabeth now had to wait for her Recipient's application to be processed and a home visit to be made. Once hours had been re-authorized for her Recipient, she could be paid for performing IHSS tasks.

All this could have been avoided with a few simple phone calls. If your Recipient is planning a trip, you might remind them of their duty to notify the Social Worker, it will save you both a lot of unnecessary complications. If you or your Recipient have lost their Social Worker's phone number, you can call IHSS at 558-3976, or the Public Authority at 558-4787 and we can help you.

This is a tough lesson learned and one that I have seen before. Please be aware that any time your Recipient is away from home, your pay will be affected. *Providers are not paid for any work done when Recipients are not in the home.* If your Recipient is ever out of the home for any reason (vacation, illness, etc.) be sure to inform IHSS as soon as they return home. You deserve to be paid for your work!

Maria Osuna-Baldwin,
Registry Specialist



Free CPR Classes Available

Each quarter, Link2Care offers a CPR class for IHSS Providers*. The class is held at Doctors Medical Foundation in Modesto, and is a full day course which includes infant and adult CPR, as well as first aid.



The 2009 class schedule is as follows:

Saturday, May 30th
Friday, September 18th, and
Friday, November 6th.

To enroll in a class, please call the Link2Care offices at 558-4787.

*Interested individuals must be currently working for IHSS.

Registry Providers Remain Active!

Providers on the Registry must call once a month to update their records. If you do not call us, or return our call, we will mark you inactive.

It is important you update us when your information changes. If we do not have your updated information, IHSS consumers who need help are receiving incorrect information and you won't get work!

Call 558-4787

Spotlight on a Caregiver:

Caregivers are a special group of people who deserve our praise!

Written by: Maria Osuna-Baldwin

Leticia Plascencia has been with IHSS for 8 years. She was a seasonal cannery worker for many years and added IHSS for the off season. Her first IHSS position was working with a couple whom she had known since she was a child. From there on she got her positions with IHSS by word-of-mouth and friends until she came to be with us at the Registry in 2006. She left the cannery 2 years ago and is now working for IHSS full time. As you all know, working full time with IHSS is not the traditional full time job. She has to work for 3 people to earn the equivalent of a full-time job. On top of her happy outlook on life, her dedication and compassion for our Recipients, is her ability to laugh at herself. In addition to her outstanding qualities, I admire that she has been able to buy a home on what she earns from IHSS.

Leticia works long hours, seven days a week.

Here is a sample of one of her days:

6 am to 8:30 am – She works for a nice 92-year-old lady who calls her “Honey.” Her favorite breakfast is hash browns or hush puppy potatoes with eggs-over-hard and coffee. This lady also has a sweet tooth, so before Leticia leaves for the day, she leaves her with her “Cookie Monster” which refers to a sweet treat of any sort and a banana. Leticia says her Recipient always responds with, “Thank you, Honey!”



From 8:45 am to 11:45 am – Leticia works for a nice slow-moving 90-year-old lady whom she met through church. Her Recipient is a Spanish speaking lady who also likes to laugh at herself. When Leticia knocks on her door she can hear her lady say, “Vengo corriendo y siempre llego tarde,” which translates to, “I am running but I always arrive late.” This recipient likes to start out with a bath and then have breakfast with coffee.

From 12:00 pm to 6 pm, Leticia works for a very special couple. The gentleman looks for the fun in things and always makes Leticia laugh. Leticia likes to tease the wife and call her “Mrs. Ravioli”, because it always makes her laugh. When Leticia forgets something, the wife has been known to say, “Don’t break your head, it’s ok.” This nice lady has been known to fall a lot, so Leticia takes special care in following her around when she is ambulating. She is proud to say that her lady has not fallen while in her care.

The Registry congratulates Leticia on a job well done. We are proud to have her as one of our Caregivers on the Link 2 Care Registry!

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Has your Caregiver been doing an exceptional job? Is your caregiver a family member or close friend whom you couldn't live without? We'd love to hear your story and feature your caregiver in the next newsletter. Call us at 558-4787 to tell us your story!

Protect Yourself: Avoiding Unnecessary Illness

Have you heard the term “Universal Precaution”? No, it isn’t a warning about falling karma. Universal Precaution is the term used by medical professionals for protecting yourself against transferring germs and illnesses between Caregivers and Recipients. Caregivers and their Recipients have closer physical contact than most individuals.

Learning to prevent the transfer of potentially harmful germs and bacteria is doubly important for IHSS participants. If a Caregiver falls ill after catching something from a Recipient, not only is the Caregiver unable to work, the Recipient has no one to help them either! If a Recipient catches something from a Caregiver, they could end up hospitalized if the illness is serious. For this reason, learning and using Universal Precautions is very important.

Here are just a few of the precautions IHSS Caregivers should always take:

→ **Wash your hands with soap and water.** It isn’t enough to do a “quick rinse”. Washing your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 30 seconds will kill most germs, and should be done upon arriving to work, after using the restroom, or after assisting with any personal care where you may come into contact with body fluids.



→ **Use bandages to cover any sores, cuts, or breaks in the skin** (unless a doctor’s order says differently).

→ **Take special care when preparing foods.** Stanislaus County recently had an increase in

the reports of Norovirus, a highly contagious illness that causes severe stomach and intestinal issues. Cleaning your hands, fruits, and vegetables and disinfecting food preparation surfaces can help stop the spread of germs.

→ **Use gloves when handling or sorting soiled laundry.** Carry soiled laundry in a leak proof bag away from the body, and use hot water to clean linens soiled with body fluids. The Norovirus can also be spread through handling of soiled linens that have not been cleaned properly.

→ **Carefully dispose of sharp objects** (such as razors or needles). Put them in a puncture proof container before disposing of them. *NOTE*: In September 2008, legislation was passed that prohibits individuals from knowingly placing home generated sharps, needles, syringes and lancets in their trash. Sharps **MUST** be disposed of using an approved sharps container.



→ **Use gloves any time you come in contact with body fluids. Wear a mask, gown and/or eye protection** when performing tasks that may splash or spray blood or body fluids.

You can learn more about Universal Precautions from your IHSS Provider Handbook, or by logging on to the Health Information center website from Stanislaus County Health Services Agency at www.schsa.org/PublicHealth and clicking the Health Information link.

Tax Time is Here: Are You Ready?



By now, you should have received a W-2 for each Recipient you worked for in 2008. W-2's CANNOT be picked up by the Caregiver from IHSS. They are mailed out by the State.

If you have moved or plan to move be sure to keep the IHSS Payroll staff or your Social Services Assistant (SSA) updated with your current address. Undeliverable W-2s begin to be received in Stanislaus County from the US Postal Service around the second week in February. IHSS Payroll will mail the W-2's to the Caregiver if a new address has been provided.

Once you receive your W-2's look over the information for accuracy. If you find errors, contact your SSC or IHSS Payroll for a Corrected W-2.

If W-2's need to be corrected due to errors or replaced due to being lost or destroyed it is important that your SSC or IHSS Payroll is contacted as soon as possible. IHSS Payroll began to request duplicate W-2's in March. This allows the State enough time to return any W-2's that were not delivered to the Counties.

You can contact the IHSS Payroll Department by calling 558-3976 Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm.

Do You Qualify for a Credit?

Have you heard? The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families. Even if you did not owe taxes in 2008, you may still be eligible for this credit, resulting in a tax refund for those who qualify and claim. That's right - you must claim your credit in order to receive it.



I visited the IRS website and placed some basic information in the EITC quick calculator to see if an individual who was married, made \$30,000 in 2008 and had one eligible child would receive a credit. The calculator estimated an \$1,100 credit! Even if you aren't sure whether you qualify, it is worth taking a look. There is no personal information (such as Social Security number) required to estimate a credit using their calculator.

In most cases, the EITC has no effect on certain welfare benefits (such as SSI, TANF, etc.). You do not have to have children to qualify, and you do not necessarily have to be below the poverty level to receive a check. You must file a tax return however, even if you did not make enough money to be required to file.

Do you think you may be eligible? For more information about the EITC and to see if you qualify, you can visit www.irs.gov/individuals, and click on the link for EITC.

Senior Centers without Walls

What is Senior Centers without Walls (SCWW)? SCWW offers activities, friendly conversation and an assortment of classes and support groups to homebound elders and those who find it difficult to go to a community senior center. Seniors can participate from the comfort of their own homes through telephone conference calls. No special equipment is needed, and the calls are completely free!



SCWW is available to seniors in Northern California. By calling 1-877-797-7299, you can register for activities, and there is no cost to participate. There is no deadline for registering, and you can add or drop a session at any time. Some classes do fill up quickly though, so it is best to register early!

Most groups last about an hour, and seniors will receive reminder calls to help participants remember to call in at the appropriate time. There are usually between 5 and 10 people on a call, and a facilitator on the call helps to manage the discussion. In addition to the activity groups, SCWW has a “Gratitude Group” where seniors can drop in by phone twice per day and say what you are grateful for. They are glass half-full, counting your blessings, blues-busting, peer facilitated sessions that help put a positive spin on daily life.

Information about SWCC has been taken from their website at www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org. Log in or call 1-877-797-7299 for more information about classes and activities is available.

Support Groups

ALZHEIMER’S CAREGIVER SUPPORT—A self-help group for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s or Dementia. Meets 9:30 a.m. the fourth Thursdays at DMC Foundation, 730 McHenry Ave., Modesto. Contact Miller’s Place at 521-0507

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP—A support group for caregivers for family members that have ALS, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, stroke or any physical brain impairment. Meets at 10a.m. the fourth Saturday at Valley Caregiver Resource Center, 1031 McHenry Ave., Suite 4, Modesto. For more information contact Karleen at 521-1794

DISABILITY SUPPORT GROUP—A support group for all disabilities (since birth or recently disabled). Share common experiences and learn about useful community services. First Thursday

of month, 3-5 pm, 221 McHenry Ave., Modesto. Contact Alexandra 521-7260 www.drail.org

SENIOR SUPPORT GROUP—A veteran peer support and psycho-education group pertaining to issues of advancing age. This group includes a review of community resources. You must be a veteran to participate in this group. Please call first for times. Veterans Outpatient Clinic 1524 McHenry #450, Modesto. For information call 557-6212 or 557-6213.





The Water Cooler

Local Events

A **place** to hear about current events, local news, and other issues ...

April 4 — Modesto Sound Concert

A free concert will be given in downtown Modesto at the 10th Street Plaza. The concert will feature a variety of bands, including LD 50, Gianna Joy, Drew Blum, and the Danny DeLeon Band. For a \$20 donation, you get a VIP seat and two drinks. All proceeds will go to the nonprofit Youth Recording Program, so get out there and enjoy the sweet sounds!



April 21—The Modesto Bee and Career Builder Job Fair

Many of us are looking or know of someone looking for more work. Join the Modesto Bee at the Modesto Centre Plaza on April 21st and be ready to interview!



May 16—Family Cycling Festival

Family fun for all includes bicycle races, BMX stunt teams, obstacle course races, face painting and more! This event will take place in downtown Modesto from 10am to 3pm. Please call 605-7315 for more information.

June 6—Modesto Scottish Highland Games & Gathering of the Clans

Over 40 clans will be in attendance at this entertaining event! See championship athletic events including caber toss, Scottish hammer, and putting the stone. Professional bagpiping bands and other musical entertainment will also be present. The even is at the Tuolumne River Regional Park, and begins at 9am. Admission is \$11 for age 13 and older, free for those under 12.

June 12-14—American Graffiti Car Show and Festival

We can't list summer events without including Graffiti! This festival will again be held on the weekend prior to Father's Day. The parade will be in downtown Modesto on Friday evening and the car show will be at MJC East Campus with plenty of cars and displays. In addition to the MJC show, there are many shows throughout the summer. Be sure to watch the local news for more information.



For more events taking place all year round, visit www.visitmodesto.com

Banana Berry Pancakes



Ingredients:

1 large banana, peeled & sliced
1 cup complete pancake mix (like Bisquick)
1/2 cup water
Nonstick cooking spray

Topping:

1 cup unsweetened frozen strawberries, thawed and sliced
2 Tablespoons orange juice

Preparation:

- ◆ Place bananas in a medium bowl and mash with fork.
- ◆ Add pancake mix and water; stir until blended.
- ◆ Spray a large skillet with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium heat.
- ◆ Pour 1/4 cup of batter for each pancake into hot skillet. Cook pancakes for about 2 minutes per side until fully cooked.

Topping:

- ◆ To make the topping, spray a pan with nonstick cooking spray and heat over medium heat.
- ◆ Cook berries and orange juice for 3 minutes or until the berries are soft.
- ◆ Spoon topping over pancakes and serve.

Taken from the Champions for Change: Network for a Healthy California "Healthy Latino Recipes" Cookbook.
Makes 4 servings; 2 pancakes per serving. Calories 109, Carbohydrate 24g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Protein 2g, Total Fat 1g, Saturated & Trans Fat 0g, Cholesterol 3mg, Sodium 182mg

Wake up to This!

Here are some interesting facts about our favorite morning beverage:

- ☕ Coffee is the world's most popular stimulant: 4 out of 5 Americans drink it, consuming more than 400 million cups a day.
- ☕ Coffee is the seed of a cherry from the tree genus Coffea. One tree yields about 2lb of coffee per year.
- ☕ Caffeine increases the power of aspirin and other painkillers. That's why it is found in some medicines. Ironically, caffeine withdrawal also is one of the most common causes of headaches.
- ☕ The word "tip" is also related to coffee. It comes from old London coffeehouses where the waiters' brass boxes were etched with the inscription, "To Insure Promptness."

Can't start your day without caffeine?

Here's how your cup of java stands up to the competition:

Drip coffee: 115mg
Espresso: 80mg
Instant coffee: 65mg
Decaffeinated coffee: 3mg

1 can Cola: 23mg-25mg
1 can Mountain Dew: 37mg
Tea: 40mg
1 ounce chocolate: 20mg



Questions Need Answers

Here are some common issues IHSS participants need help with, and the person who can help:

Provider Issues:

I don't have timecards..... SSA
My check is late.....Payroll
I need a new recipient..... Link2Care
I was injured while working for IHSS..... SSA
I want insurance information..... Link2Care
I have a friend who needs IHSS..... IHSS Intake
I need a CPR class.....Link2Care
My paycheck is wrong, or I don't understand my deductions.....Payroll or SSA
I need a hire packet.....Have Recipient request one from their Social Worker or SSA

Recipient Issues:

I hired someone new and need the paperworkSSA or Social Worker(SW)
I am going to the hospital.....SW
I need more IHSS authorized hours.....SW
I have questions about my Share of Cost.....SW
I was just released from the hospital.....SW
I need a new provider..... SSA or SW
I have a friend who needs IHSS..... IHSS Intake

Link2Care: 558-4787
Payroll: 558-3976
IHSS Intake: 558-2637

Call 558-3976 to find out who your Social Worker (SW) Social Services Assistants (SSA) is.

Cut out and save the above for easy reference!



PO Box 42
Modesto, CA 95353