

**PRESBYTERY of DES MOINES**  
**Older Adult Ministries (OAM) and Congregational Health Ministry**  
**OCTOBER '09 E-Newsletter**

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**What older adults fear most**

**From** missybu, **Blog date:** September 21, 2009.

A few days ago, I made my regular weekly visit to the senior residence center where my parents once lived. While chatting with older adults who have become my friends, I scanned the dining room in search of a particular 94-year-old woman, Edna. I had seen her in the hospital but the last update indicated that she would soon be moving back to her senior apartment.

I was about to ask a neighbor about Edna when another woman hurried toward me. "Missy, we just found out that Edna died... ten days ago!"

I gasped. Ten days ago? Why hadn't someone told me? Why hadn't someone told the residents?

Word of Edna's death began to spread like a California wildfire through the residence center. Smiles turned downward as residents discovered that their friend had passed away. Most were outwardly shocked, not so much about her death, but that no one had told them. In fact, they were grieved to think that not one of them had attended their friend's funeral.

Later that day I spoke with Edna's daughter. I learned there had been no obituary. But she had indeed phoned the center's office and asked them to share the news with the residents. Sadly, the administrators made a terrible mistake. The announcement of Edna's death was never made.

Back in the dining room, I listened to the troubled conversations among the elderly residents, realizing that their talk hinted at even deeper concerns. Most older adults are not afraid of dying. At least that was the consensus of this group. Sure, they are fearful of lingering in a state of suffering or outliving their money, but most of all, they are afraid of being left alone and forgotten.

I couldn't help but wonder if churches truly understand this fear, especially among those who are frail. Are families keenly aware of the importance of their presence in the lives of older loved ones?

Let us be the hands of Christ that hold wrinkled, trembling hands in ours. Let us be the feet of Christ, slowing our pace to match those using walkers. Let us be the smile of Christ, the One who never forgets his aging children.

*Missy Buchanan is Author of Living with Purpose in a Worn-out Body: Spiritual Encouragement for Older Adults (Upper Room) and Columnist, Aging Well, United Methodist Reporter [www.missybuchanan.com](http://www.missybuchanan.com). The article was blogged at <http://missybu.wordpress.com/2009/09/21/what-older-adults-fear-most/>.*

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Under the banner of its Community Advocacy Network (CAN), the **Alliance for Retired Americans** partners with a broad network of community-based groups committed to senior issues. Anyone who shares our vision to protect the health and economic security of older Americans is welcome to join. For an annual membership fee of \$10, you can add your voice to the millions who make up the Alliance for Retired Americans. **Des Moines First Presbyterian Church elder Midge Slater**, suggested we add the Alliance to our list of available resource Web sites: [retiredamericans.org](http://retiredamericans.org). She is currently working for them. Thanks Midge for the tip!

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### **NCCA Webinars with Gene Cohen**

The National Center for Creative Aging is holding a series of five webinars led by Dr. Gene Cohen, the principle investigator for the landmark "Creativity & Aging Study". This research provides Iowa arts organizations with important rationale for providing programming and outreach to aging Iowans.

The webinars will be Oct. 5, 19, 27 and Nov. 16, 2009. Cost is \$50 per webinar. For more details, visit [www.creativeaging.com](http://www.creativeaging.com).

The study measured the impact of professionally conducted community-based cultural programs on the physical health, mental health, and social activities of individuals aged 65 and older. Implications from the study show a positive impact of participatory art programs for older adults on their health, frequency of doctor's visits, use of medication, loneliness and morale.

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### **2010 Older Adult Ministry Recognition Scheduled for Presbytery**

Next year, at the Nov. 9, 2010 Stated Meeting of the Presbytery, the Older Adult Ministry Task Force would like to recognize members of our churches who have exemplified positive images of aging in their personal lives, the life of the church and/or community. There are many in our midst who serve/have served as role models to all generations with a sense of God's grace. Forms for these recognitions will be available at the May 18, 2010 Stated Meeting of the Presbytery and also sent by mail, with reminders at appropriate intervals with Aug. 21, 2010, as a deadline. Contact **Older Adult Ministry Task Force Moderator Darlene Shepherd** at [dshep@mahaska.org](mailto:dshep@mahaska.org) or 641-673-5793 if you'd like to help with important recognition.

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