



# The Link



R I C H L A N D C O U N T Y C O M M I S S I O N O N A G I N G

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- Scorecard can help you pinpoint areas that increase the risk of stroke
- Senior Coalition is closing the service gaps for seniors
- Do you have extra time and want to make a difference? Become a Sr. Companion!

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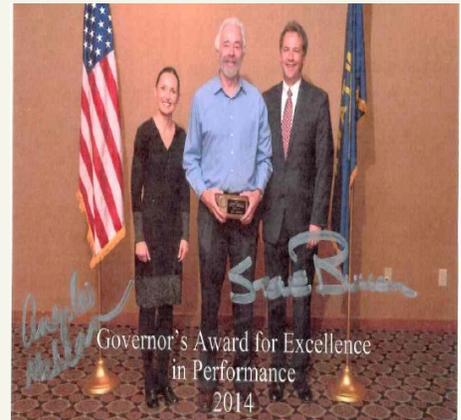
**L E G A L C L I N I C**

The man instrumental in implementing Richland County’s Legal Clinic has been recognized for his dedication to Seniors. John McCrea was awarded the Governor’s Award for Excellence by the Department of Public Health and Human Services for his work with the Area Agencies on Aging and the Montana State Bar to develop legal clinics where senior citizens, especially low income senior citizens can get their legal documents prepared free of charge. In the past year, over 400 people received assistance in getting their legal documents completed.

In October, John, with the help of Billings Attorney Julianne Lore and the Richland County Commission on Aging, began an on-going Legal clinic here in Richland County to help seniors get their affairs in order and give them piece of mind. Richland County has held two Clinics so far; one in October and one in December with more to come in 2015.

If you are a Senior over the age of 60 and would like the opportunity to have your legal documents prepared, please call the **Commission on Aging at 433-3701**.

After a short questionnaire your information will be forwarded to John McCrea and he will call you to set up an appointment. The documents you can have done free of charge at your appointment are: Beneficiary Deed, Durable Power of Attorney (Financial and Health), Declaration of Living Will, Declaration of Homestead, Affidavit of Death and Simple Will.



**H F S S U C C E S S**

The Commission on Aging, Richland County Transportation, Senior Companion, and Retired Senior Volunteer Programs were able to deliver almost 1000 servings of vegetables to Richland County Seniors during this years “Harvest for Seniors.” Event organizers say “We are so happy with the community support and the generous donations the project received again this year. Thanks so much to everyone who donated and thank you to everyone who helped to deliver, making this program a success once again.”

The table to the right shows the numbers of servings of each item delivered during 2014’s HFS.

Tomatoes	136	Egg Plant	21
Cucumbers	149	Gr Beans	63
Squash	27	Zucchini	37
Swiss chard	11	Carrots	53
Peppers	52	Beets	43
Cabbage	38	Apples	30
Onions	77	Potatoes	8
Dill	11	Pumpkins	3
Corn	52	Rutabaga	5
Potatoes	8	Avocado	2

## SAVAGE SENIORS RECEIVE THEIR EMERGENCY DISASTER BAGS



Action for Eastern Montana partnered with Richland and McCone Counties RSVP, Richland County Commission on Aging, and the Richland County Health Department to supply “Grab and Go Bags” to area Seniors. Action for Eastern Montana applied for 3 separate grants from the Governor’s Office of Community Service to purchase items for emergency disaster kits. 100 bags were distributed between Nashua, Broadus and Savage; all small rural towns in Eastern Montana.”

The Senior Companion Director, RSVP Staff and the Commission on Aging staff brought 40 bags to the Savage Senior Center on October 23rd. The bags were then distributed to Seniors who were at the weekly Congregate meal.

Each kit had a warm blanket, flashlight, radio, batteries and a first aid kit packed inside a carrying bag. In the event of an emergency, these bags (along with personal supplies, food and water) would allow a senior to be able to leave their home and have what they would need to survive for at least a few days.

## PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES BEFORE THEY HAPPEN

Emergencies can happen any time and they often strike without warning. Help may not be available right away. That’s why it is critical that older adults and people with disabilities plan for emergencies *before* they happen. Here are 3 important steps to consider in preparing for a natural disaster:

- **Involve your community.** When putting together a plan, individuals with disabilities and older adults should talk with their neighbors, family members, caregivers, and community members about emergency preparedness. Planning should be informed by individuals’ needs and should focus on creating a support team that can assist with evacuation, finding appropriate shelter, and meeting basic needs during a crisis. Take into account situations when local services and supports are not available, and an individual needs to relocate out of the community.
- **Pack an emergency medical kit.** People with disabilities and older people with chronic health conditions should be prepared for any medical needs they may have.
- **Make a plan for pets and service**

**animals.** Pack an emergency kit for animals too!

*Don't do everything all at once. Work on one thing at a time. Before you know it, you'll be ready!*

**Create an emergency supply kit for your home.** You should have at least 3 days of supplies for each person. Your kit should include:

- ⇒ **WATER**—Store at least 1 gallon of water per person per day. Store extra for any pets.
- ⇒ **NONPERISHABLE FOOD** Canned meat, vegetables, fruit, and fish, crackers, cereal, granola and protein bars and food for any pets.
- ⇒ **PERSONAL SUPPLIES**—Hygiene products (such as toilet paper, tissues, hair and mouth care items. Extra clothing and shoes. You will also need a blanket or sleeping bag for each person.
- ⇒ **MEDICAL BASICS**— A first-aid kit and manual, medications and medical supplies for all household members, copies of prescriptions, extra hearing aid battery, glasses and cane if needed.

⇒ **GENERAL SUPPLIES**—You will need a battery-powered radio and flashlight, and extra batteries, utensils like a can opener, fork, knives, a multipurpose fire extinguisher, tools ( shovel, wrenches to shut off utilities, soap, hand sanitizer, plain chlorine bleach, plastic sheeting, scissors and duct tape, copies of important documents, cash or traveler’s checks and coins.

\* If possible, plan for up to 2 weeks in case you need to stay longer.

**Have a “grab-and-go” supply kit, too.** This should be a smaller version of your home supply kit. Keep it handy in case you are ordered to leave your home.

**YOUR KIT SHOULD INCLUDE:**

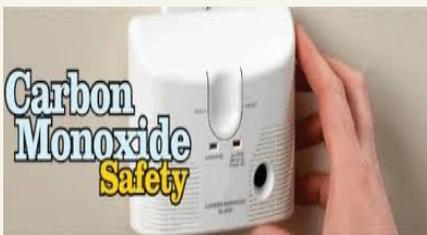
- ⇒ A battery powered radio, and non perishable food, flashlight and extra batteries, extra medication and medical supplies, plus copies of prescriptions, hearing aids, vision and mobility aides with extra batteries. A change of clothing and shoes, blanket or sleeping bag, pet supplies, copies of important documents, and extra cash.

**\*Keep your kit light enough to carry. Put everything in an easy to carry bag.**

## STAYING SAFE THIS WINTER

Chilling temperatures and treacherous snow and ice can terrorize the elderly and their caregivers during the winter months. According to AgingCare.com, here are a few things to keep in mind to help keep seniors safe during the frigid season:

1. **Hypothermia** - Each year, half of Americans who die from hypothermia are at least 65 years old. The elderly are particularly susceptible to becoming dangerously chilled because they have less fat, slower circulation and more sluggish metabolism. A senior can even become hypothermic while indoors, so the thermostat should never be set below 65 degrees for a person who is 75 or older. Make sure that an elderly person is warmly dressed when inside the house as well as outside.
2. **Dehydration** - Seniors are especially prone to becoming dehydrated simply because they eat and drink less than younger people, thus they consume less water. In general, people also feel less thirsty during the winter and so are more prone to not drinking as much as they should. Make sure your elderly loved one is drinking consistently.
3. **Ice and Snow** - Sidewalks slick with ice and snow pose a serious falling hazard for an elderly person. Make sure that the porch, driveway, sidewalk, etc. has been thoroughly cleaned. Try not to let them do it themselves—bring a shovel or hire an outside service. To maximize a senior's stability, be sure they have rubber-soled shoes and new treads on their walker or cane.
4. **Disaster kit** - Winter storms can be fierce enough to knock down power lines and forcibly confine seniors to their homes. It is essential to make sure a senior is equipped with a disaster kit to help them get through these times. Each kit should include enough food and water for several days (at least 3 gallons of water per person per day), a few days-worth of medication for the senior, a flashlight, a weather radio, extra batteries, and first-aid essentials.
5. **Clothing** - Mittens, scarves, sweaters, hats, and coats are a few of the must-have articles of clothing for seniors living in colder climates. Even when an elderly person is indoors, they should be dressed in warm layers so they can take clothes off if they are too hot, or put more on if they are too cold.
6. **Space heaters** - While they can provide an elderly person with some much-needed warmth during the colder months, precautions need to be taken so these sources of heat don't become health hazards. If the heater is gas powered, make sure the senior has a fully-functional carbon monoxide detector. If the heater is electric, make sure the cords aren't damaged or fraying. Keep all heaters away from flammable materials such as cloth and paper and make sure the smoke detector is working properly.



Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an invisible gas that you everyone needs to be aware of. The danger is that you can't see or smell it but it can be deadly at high levels. At low levels, it can still make you sick. **Dizziness, headaches, fatigue, confusion, nausea, shortness of breath** are all symptoms of CO poisoning. Unfortunately, since they also resemble symptoms of other common illnesses, it

can be hard to diagnose. If the symptoms come on quick and you have any reason to suspect CO poisoning, do not hesitate; get out into fresh air immediately and go to an emergency room.

One of the most important steps you can take in CO prevention is having a trained professional perform a safety inspection on all fuel-burning appliances. These appliances include gas or oil furnaces, water heaters, ranges, ovens, clothes dryers, portable kerosene or gas space heaters, wood or coal stoves and fireplaces.

While prevention of CO should be your first priority, you can also

install digital CO Detectors. Plug-in and battery-powered detectors are designed to sound an alarm when they sense harmful CO levels. Make sure the detectors meet American Gas Association or Underwriters Laboratories (UL2034) standard and use them only as a back-up measure, not as a substitute for common sense and an annual appliance inspection and maintenance. When you purchase the detector, check the life expectancy of the sensor cell located inside the detector and replace the unit accordingly. Install detectors on the wall or ceiling outside your bedroom and in the furnace room.

# Little - Known Winter Dangers For Seniors

Falls and hypothermia are likely to top the list of senior and caregiver concerns during the icy winter months. While those are valid concerns, seniors are also at risk for some lesser known, but still impactful, hazards brought on by frigid weather. Seasonal affective disorder and vitamin D deficiency can be hazardous to a senior's health. The good news is, they are both easily treatable if identified and dealt with properly.

## Winter SADness

Feeling a bit glum may seem like an ordinary reaction to the fading glow of the holidays. But, when that feeling of sadness persists for more than a week or two, it might not be just the lack of festive lights and carols getting you down.

Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known by the acronym, SAD, is a form of depression that cycles with the seasons. It can occur during any time of the year, but it typically hits most people in the winter.

As the weather gradually gets colder and the days get shorter, people affected by the winter-induced form of SAD will generally begin to feel the symptoms of depression, including a loss of energy, an increased appetite and an enhanced feeling of lethargy and tiredness.

According to the National Institutes of Health, SAD is more likely to strike women and people who live in northern areas where the sun is not as strong or constant.

The main difference between SAD and general depression is that SAD only strikes during certain times of the year. The hormonal changes that lead to depressive symptoms in people with

SAD are usually caused by a decline in the amount of daylight during the winter and fall. These effects can be compounded if a person primarily stays indoors and doesn't have the opportunity to venture out into the sun often.

## Turn Your Frown Upside Down

Like other forms of depression SAD can be treated with antidepressant medications, which are most effective if started prior to the onset of symptoms each year. Another form of treatment designed to alleviate the symptoms of SAD is light therapy.

Light therapy utilizes a piece of equipment called a 'light box'—essentially a fluorescent lamp that gives off light similar to natural sunlight. A good quality light box generally costs about \$200 and most come with a filter that blocks UV rays so that the light does not damage a person's eyes or skin.

Research has shown that, when used properly, a light box can help decrease the amount of melatonin (a hormone that causes drowsiness and lethargy) circulating in a person's body, and regulate the neurotransmitters serotonin and epinephrine. Having an imbalance of these chemicals can heighten the symptoms of depression.

If you or a loved one is diagnosed with SAD, their doctor may instruct them to sit in front of the box for 30 to 45 minutes a day, usually in the morning, in order to make up for the lack of sunlight most people experience during the winter. Though it is not always the go-to treatment for SAD, some studies have shown that light therapy has the potential to be as effective as antidepressant medication when it comes to treating the disorder.

Of course, a more natural alternative to light therapy is daily exposure to sunlight. If time and weather conditions permit, it would be helpful for a person with SAD to go outside for a few minutes during daylight hours.

## Vitamin D Deficiency

Vitamin D is a vital nutrient that has been linked to bone health and the prevention of cancer, incontinence and diabetes. A person can obtain vitamin D by eating certain foods, brief sun exposure, and by taking dietary supplements.

Lacking vitamin D is bad for a person's health at any age, but can be particularly dangerous for the elderly. Older people who don't get enough vitamin D have an increased risk for developing osteoporosis—a dangerous decrease in bone density that can contribute to broken bones.

Unfortunately, older people are less efficient at using sunlight to produce vitamin D, and are more likely to be housebound and unable to be exposed to enough sunlight to be beneficial. Certain medications can also inhibit a person's ability to produce and metabolize vitamin D.

## Fortify Your Senior Against a D Deficit

Combating vitamin D deficiency in the elderly can be tricky. Making sure you eat foods fortified with Vitamin D is the safest way to help reduce or prevent a deficit. Certain varieties of milk, yogurt and juice all contain extra doses of the vitamin, but not so much as to pose a hazard to your health.

If you are considering a supplement or extra time in the sun, make sure you consult your doctor for the your best course of action.

## THINK YOU ARE HAVING A STROKE? CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY!

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the sudden signs of stroke. When you can spot the signs, you'll know that you need to call 9-1-1 for help right away. F.A.S.T. stands for:

**F** **Face Drooping** – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?

**A** **Arm Weakness** – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**S** **Speech Difficulty** – Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

**T** **Time to call 9-1-1** – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

## LOWER YOUR CHANCES OF A STROKE

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States. Early treatment at the first sign of a stroke is crucial to improving your chances of recovery but prevention is always the best medicine. Knowing your risk of a stroke can help you take steps to lower your chance of having a stroke at all. The following "scorecard" will help you determine your risk factors and take steps to lower your score.

To use the scorecard, check which category you fall into for each "Risk Factor" then total each column's risk factors at the bottom:

RISK FACTOR	HIGH RISK	CAUTION	LOW RISK
<b>Blood Pressure</b>	>140/90 or unknown	120-139/80-89	<120/80
<b>Atrial Fibrillation</b>	Irregular heartbeat	I don't know	Regular heartbeat
<b>Smoking</b>	Smoker	Trying to quit	Nonsmoker
<b>Cholesterol</b>	>240 or unknown	200-239	<200
<b>Diabetes</b>	Yes	Borderline	No
<b>Exercise</b>	Couch potato	Some exercise	Regular exercise
<b>Diet</b>	Overweight	Slightly overweight	Healthy weight
<b>Stroke in Family</b>	Yes	Not sure	No
<b>Totals</b>	_____ High Risk	_____ Caution	_____ Low Risk

High Risk: If you checked 3 or more in the "High Risk" column, ask your doctor about stroke prevention right away!  
 Caution: If you checked 4-6 in the "Caution" column you have a good start. Ask your doctor how to lower your risk.  
 Low Risk: If you checked 6-8 in the "Low Risk" column you're doing very well at controlling your risk of stroke!

## SERVICE SPOTLIGHT: CONGREGATE MEALS

If you haven't been to your local Senior Center lately, now is a great time to start! Not only do the centers offer fun, an opportunity to visit, and a chance to catch up with friends but every single one of them serves delicious, home cooked meals.

Richland County is fortunate enough to have four Senior Centers that, between them, serve delicious meals five days per week. Every center throughout the County is open to the public and welcomes newcomers and guests.

Congregate meals are a great way to reconnect with friends, share a

laugh, and catch up on the week's events. Seniors are encouraged to visit their neighboring centers as well. What better way to visit with old friends and make a couple new ones along the way!

The Center schedules are as follows:

*Peterson Memorial Center (Sidney)*

Meals on Mon & Fri; 11am  
Sr. Activities on Thurs; 1-4pm

*Fairview Senior Center*

Meals on Mon & Wed; 11:30am  
Sr. Activities on Wed; 1-4pm

*Savage Senior Center*

Meals on Thurs; 12pm  
Sr. Activities on Thurs; 8-3:30pm

*Fox Lake Senior Center (Lambert)*

Meals on Tues; 12pm

If you are new to the area, it can be difficult walking into a new place and not

know anyone but don't let that stop you from going. Richland County Commission on Aging can pair you with a "lunch buddy" that will meet you for lunch at the center of your choice and introduce you to others. What better way to get acquainted with the area and get to know your peers! Call **433-3701** for more information.



Fox Lake Sr. Center

## SENIOR COMPANIONS NEEDED

Do you wish you could make life a little better for some of your neighbors? Think about becoming a Senior Companion. We are currently looking for 4 Senior Companions in Richland County in Fairview, Savage and Sidney.

Senior Companions are 55 years and older who volunteer their time to help other adults maintain their independence. Things Companions may do for clients include taking them shopping, go with them to doctor appointments, to meals out and social activities help with reading or writing, or just visiting. Anyone over age 60 *or* any adult with a medical need can have a Companion at no charge - these services are completely free to clients.

Companions receive training and reimbursement for expenses. They also receive a small stipend, a "little cream check," to help enable them to give their time in this way. The stipend is not income so it will not affect your Social Security or other help you may receive. Their clients then know that they can ask without feeling they are imposing on anyone. Companions and their clients agree together what sorts of things the Companion will and will not do, and the Senior Com-

panion Program helps them put it down in writing so everyone understands what is expected.

Companions (not clients) must meet income guidelines. This year someone in a one-person household can have an annual income of \$23,340.00 (1945.00 per month) or less; for two people in a family the limit is \$31,460.00(2622 per month) and the limit grows along with family size. Medical expenses, including health insurance, can be deducted from income amounts and resources (money in the bank or property) are not counted at all. **Stipends do not count as income for other programs or benefits the Companion might receive.**

Applications are available at Action for Eastern Montana Offices or by calling 1-406-433-4967 you can also call Richland Commission on Aging director Jody Berry at 433-3701

Funding is provided by a federal grant that is administered through *Action for Eastern Montana* for seventeen Eastern Montana counties and is directed by Karen O'Dell, (1-866-433-4967) whose office is in Sidney.

## SENIOR COALITION: BIG PLANS FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Richland County Senior Coalition is gearing up for a busy year. The Coalition is a group of local advocates who have come together to address the gaps in services available to our seniors. After an initial fundraising drive in December of 2013 and a Color Race in 2014, the Coalition was able to start taking applications.

Since the Color Race in June, the Coalition has been able to provide a number of seniors with life-saving medications, in-home medication set ups, chronic pain management classes, personal care, and help during medically related financial struggles. This year, the Coalition is striving to be able to help even more. To raise additional funds, the Coalition is expanding on last year's Color Race which had more than 300 participants and raised over \$4000.

Committee members say, "This year we want to make

the Color Race bigger; have sponsors for each color station, and follow it up with a family oriented day in the park. We're hoping for a carnival style atmosphere for the "Party in the Park" that other groups can use to raise funds for their non-profit organizations as well."

Because the Coalition is run by volunteers, 100% of the donations and the money raised during the Color Race goes directly toward services for Richland County's seniors. If you would like more information about the Coalition or to find out how to apply for funds, please call 433-3701.



## A SENIOR CENTER CHRISTMAS

The Christmas spirit was alive and well at the Fairview Senior Center this past December. Cook Teresa Larson wanted to do something special for the people she spends so much of her time with throughout the week.

Every person who came to dinner on December 17th was given a small gift wrapped package. Most of the presents yielded either chocolates or

cakes but one present among them was "Santa's Candy".

Bev Reichenbach was lucky enough to unwrap the package with Santa on the box which not only earned her a second present but also Dan Faiman; who was lucky enough to be sitting in the exact seat at the next table.

The "grand prize" presents were comprised of nearly \$100 of County Commemorative merchandise. The "Centennial Box" (donated by the Richland County Centennial Committee) contained a large umbrella, blanket & pillowcase, campfire mug, and mason jar glass all depicting Richland County's 2014 Centennial.

Similar Centennial Boxes were donated to the Sidney, Savage and Lambert centers as well. All the centers except Fairview divided up the gifts and held individual drawings. Congratulations to all the winners!



Some of the winners at the Sidney Senior Center drawing

### Centennial Items Still Available

If you want your own Commemorative merchandise its not too late. Centennial items are now half price and can be purchased at the MonDak Heritage Center at 120 3rd Ave SE in Sidney.

Items still available include camp chairs, umbrellas, t-shirts (youth and adult sizes), coffee mugs, tumblers, pillowcases, golf balls & much more!



Bev R. with her prize at the Fairview Senior Center



**RICHLAND COUNTY  
COMMISSION ON  
AGING**

1201 W Holly St, Ste 1  
Sidney, MT 59270

Phone: 406-433-3701  
TTY: 800-335-7592  
Fax: 406-433-5800  
E-mail: jberry@richland.org

**Bringing Seniors and Services Together**

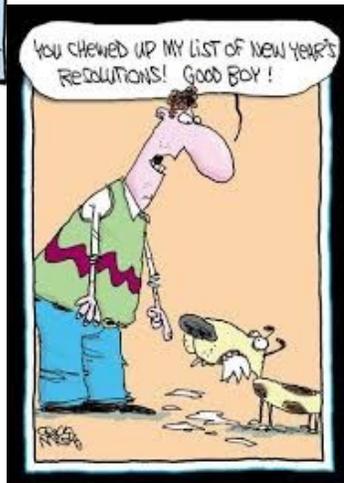
**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**



Grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, The good fortune to run into the ones that I do, And the eyesight to tell the difference.

An optimist stays up to see the New Year in. A pessimist waits to make sure the old one leaves.

*-Bill Vaughan*



**CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWER KEY**

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**HARVEST FESTIVAL**

www.qets.com

Solution:

1	S	2	I	3	R	4	S	5	A	6	M	7	B	8	A	9	T	10	W	11	I	12	G	13	S
14	O	15	D	E	16	W	17	H	18	O	19	O	20	P	21	H	22	I	23	R	24	E	25	S	
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44	A	45	P	46	R	47	A	48	T	49	I	50	L	51	T	52	A	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	
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