



First office location downtown



Since 2006, Senior PharmAssist has been located in the Durham Center for Senior Life

Rooted and growing in Durham

Senior PharmAssist is celebrating our 30th Anniversary!

In 1992, a task force of the Durham County Hospital Corporation wanted to better understand the pharmaceutical needs of older adults in the community. They provided a small grant to the Coordinating Council for Senior Citizens to hire a pharmacist trained in geriatrics, who was also a public health graduate intern from UNC-Chapel Hill. They became convinced that Durham needed to address two main public health concerns: many seniors could not afford the medicines they needed, and some were taking medications that were likely doing more harm than good.

That graduate student became the founding director of Senior PharmAssist (SPA), which opened its doors in June 1994 as a program of the Coordinating Council for Senior Citizens. In 1998, SPA amicably separated from the Council to become an independent nonprofit organization. This year, we're celebrating thirty years of growth and service in Durham and beyond!

From the beginning, SPA has combined user-friendly access to medications via local community pharmacies, with medication therapy management that ensures medication risks are minimized. Both efforts have focused on helping older adults with limited incomes gain control over their medication use to ensure both access and safety. In addition, preventive health education has helped participants focus on well-being beyond the use of medications (good sleep habits, smoking cessation, etc.).

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Inside the Medicine Chest

30 Years of Senior PharmAssist

Celebrations and gratitude – *pgs 1-2*

Participant Story

Meet Ms. Dianne – *pg 3*

News and Updates

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Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars! – *pg 4*

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SPA expanded over the years to address other needs by providing tailored referrals that can help with concerns such as food insecurity, transportation, and energy costs. In response to major changes in Medicare in 2006, we added insurance counseling to help beneficiaries of any age or income navigate the often overwhelming choices offered each year by Medicare health and drug plans. Today, SPA serves as the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) coordinating site for Durham, in partnership with the NC Department of Insurance.

One of the themes running through the years has been how critical it is to partner with other community agencies. The African Proverb describes our public health mantra: "If you want to go fast – go alone, but if you want to far – go together."



2020: SPA staff adapted and learned new ways to work during COVID

- With a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, we worked with advocates to create 3 statewide prescription assistance programs that were critical prior to the Medicare drug benefit.
- We collaborated with others to strengthen or create new networks, including the Partnership for a Healthy Durham, Project Access of Durham, Aging Well Durham, the Durham Medicare Rx Network, the Social Work Roundtable, and more.
- Our affiliation with the NC Assoc. of Free and Charitable Clinics allowed us to respond to COVID rapidly and creatively.
- Our partnership with Lincoln Community Health Center and DukeHealth helps us reach more participants with a grant from the NC Office of Rural Health.

- As a part of the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program at Duke for several years, we created new relationships that secured access to Duke's electronic health record for our pharmacists, focused on improving medication reconciliation in our community, and began a process to replicate the SPA model in three communities across NC.
- We work with the Durham County Health Dept and Durham TRY to distribute Narcan, lock boxes, and medication disposal kits to decrease the impact of opioid misuse or overdose.
- Community pharmacists ensure medication access and safety for our participants.
- Community providers have been appreciative of our clinical pharmacists' knowledge as well as our ability to understand the social challenges that impact health.
- The Durham County Dept of Social Services and local Social Security Administration are companions in trying to ensure more equitable services for older adults with limited incomes.
- Durham County owns the building we rent, which is managed by the Durham Center for Senior Life. DCSL staff ensures that their services are accessible to our participants. Meals on Wheels, Just for Us, the Community Health Coalition, NC Cooperative Extension, the Triangle Nonprofit & Volunteer Center, and many others spread the word about what we do as they offer their own unique services to our participants.



2022: SPA and the Durham Center for Senior Life welcomed VP Harris

Finally, what helps keep the lights on: our **staff and volunteers**, who connect with participants in meaningful ways that lead to changed lives – their's and our's! When we share those stories – **YOU** respond with amazing support. What a privilege, and we're not done yet!

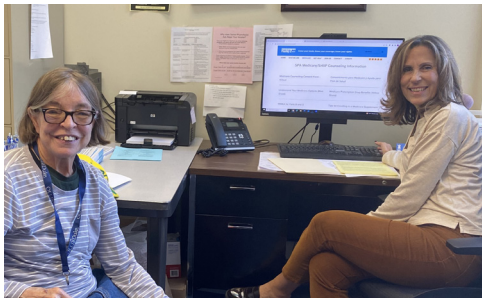
“It gives you hope”



Ms. Dianne has been a Senior PharmAssist participant for several years. She first heard about our services from the Durham Center for Senior Life; and when she learned that we could help her manage and pay for her medications, she made an appointment. “When I got there, I learned there was someone there to help me with the expenses,” she said. The review of her medications with a pharmacist helped her “to get a better understanding of the purpose of all my medicines and what I’m taking them for.” On more than one occasion, Ms. Dianne talked to a SPA pharmacist about a side effect or an adverse reaction she was having to her medications.

“The most surprising thing about Senior PharmAssist,” she said, “is how much they care.” Born and raised in Durham, Ms. Dianne was a certified nursing assistant for 42 years. She understands healthcare from the perspective of a caregiver and as a patient. “It gives you hope to know someone out there cares for you,” she says. “Everyone needs a little hope, especially right now.”

News & Updates



Dory and staff pharmacist Jessica review her Medicare options during OEP

During the **Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP) at the end of 2023**, Senior PharmAssist helped **1,208** individuals review and choose the best Medicare plan for them. Of those, **567** people compared stand-alone Part D drug plans for 2024 in order to find savings. And it worked: 53% switched plans for a mean projected annual savings in 2024 of **\$1,300** (median = \$433)! Individuals who had not used our Medicare counseling services in the past were more likely to switch plans (66%) for a mean savings of **\$959** (median of \$594). This is why our Medicare tagline is: ***It pays to compare!***

Fox Family Foundation issued a challenge grant to our donors: they would match new gifts, returning gifts, and increased gifts with a 1:1 match between December 1 and April 30. Our generous supporters answered the challenge, meeting the goal far before our deadline and giving over \$40,000! Fox Family Foundation’s challenge grant doubles the impact of all who gave to support our programs in 2024. We’re so grateful for our generous community that helps our neighbors remain as healthy as possible for as long as possible.




Recently, we checked in with teams in three communities (Buncombe, Guilford/High Point, and Pitt) who worked with us last year to replicate the SPA model. With a grant from the National Institute of Aging, we worked with colleagues from the Duke Roybal Center and the Duke Schools of Nursing and Medicine to support their work and study their efforts. We were thrilled to hear they are all moving forward, energized to make something happen! Several of them have grants and have begun delivering services to older adults. We are now reviewing the project and deciding how to proceed to help more communities, while also ensuring that our work in Durham remains strong. We’ll keep you posted.


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To update your contact information or preferences, please call 919-956-5812, email info@seniorpharmassist.org, or scan the QR code with your phone's camera to access a quick form.




Coming up at Senior PharmAssist

MEDICARE BASICS

A free & comprehensive introduction to Medicare

 **Tuesday, April 23: 6:00pm**
In person at the Durham Center for Senior Life

 **Tuesday, May 21: 6:00pm**
In person at the Durham Center for Senior Life

 **Tuesday, June 18: 6:00pm**
Virtual seminar

Sessions are one hour + plenty of time for Q&A.



To register, scan the QR code, visit our website (www.seniorpharmassist.org), or contact Katrina: knesmith@seniorpharmassist.org or 919.688.4772

SHRED-A-THON

Dispose of health, financial, or other documents safely.

Friday, June 7: 1:00-4:00pm
Durham Center for Senior Life parking lot

- Convenient drive-through set up
- Bring your documents for FREE and SAFE disposal
- Volunteers available to help with boxes
- Pick up educational materials and some popcorn!



NC DEPARTMENT OF
INSURANCE
SENIORS' HEALTH INSURANCE
INFORMATION PROGRAM

Call us anytime to ask questions or make an appointment: 919-688-4772