



Dr. Fletcher knew who to call when he was concerned about polypharmacy - he remembered a home visit that Gina Upchurch (left) made to his mother in 1994!

## Medicare Savings Report

*Per usual - it pays to compare plans*

Our 2022 savings projections are in and the savings have been consistent and significant since 2006! We helped 1,149 individuals with appointments during the seven-week Open Enrollment Period (Oct 15 – Dec 7).

We were able to offer both in-person and telehealth appointments with our staff and volunteers trained by the NC Department of Insurance, Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). Just over half of the Medicare beneficiaries we counseled (584) were in stand-alone drug plans and were looking at similar coverage for 2022.

*Continued on page 2*

## Inside the Medicine Chest

**Medicare Matters All Year Round**  
Saving dollars and cents since 1994  
– page 2

**Rogers' Drug Co.**  
See our new display of items from Durham pharmacy history – page 3

**A Note from our Executive Director**  
On the importance of treating everyone with dignity – page 3

**COVID-19 Supply Distribution**  
Learn about our work to keep our participants safe from COVID-19 – page 4

# Medicare Savings

Continued from page 1

**Fifty-two percent** of these individuals changed plans to save an average of **\$673** on their medications (\$341 median). Participants who were new to us are projected to save even more in 2022 - **\$798** (\$421 median) by switching to plans that cover their medications at less overall cost (premiums, deductibles, and other cost-sharing at the pharmacy). Even when medications and what pharmacy is used don't change, the Medicare D drug plans change what they cover and how much they charge!

Of course, those in Medicare Advantage plans rely on our team – staff and wonderful SHIP-trained volunteers – to help make not only drug coverage choices but also medical coverage decisions (costs to see provider, hospital stays, added perks, etc.).

These savings also don't include the additional **220 pharmacist interventions** to access drug manufacturer's programs, choreographing affordable solutions to complex medication discount systems, or our own direct financial assistance to lower medication copayments at local pharmacies. Food and transportation assistance, applications to help pay medical bills, and support to enroll in Medicare savings programs were also critical interventions during the busy seven weeks.



## Saving Dollars and Cents Since 1994



Medicare counseling is vital all year long! Recently, we helped someone who was being erroneously charged Medicare Part D (drug plan) late enrollment penalties even though she has had "creditable" prescription coverage through her employer.

Fortunately, we got the charges reversed – giving her a **credit of \$293!** Incidentally, the individual we helped was the bookkeeper for the Council for Senior Citizens when we first began as a program of the Council (now the Durham Center for Senior Life) in 1994. We amicably separated from the Council in 1998 to start our own nonprofit organization so that we could expand services. We are thrilled that we could repay the attention to dollars and cents that served us so well in our early years!



## Special Thanks to our Medicare Volunteers

Peter Adland  
Marilyn Bailey  
Jay Barbaccia  
Bill Boyarsky

BJ Boyarsky  
DeLon Canterbury  
Jim Drennan

Collette Driscoll  
Bruce Hays  
Anna Hung

Henry Luftman  
Roslyn Muse  
Mackie Spruill

# Customer Service Appreciation

By Gina Upchurch, Executive Director

I am not too shy about sharing my life with our Senior PharmAssist family, especially when the personal and professional collide as they often do. I was recently prescribed a medication that I will likely need to take for the rest of my life. It is really not that expensive (for me anyway) but I am concerned about the potential side effects, after all, I am a pharmacist trained in geriatrics! It struck me that if I could not afford it or if I weren't sure where to turn for expert advice – I am not sure I would "follow doctor's orders." I would likely feel a twinge of embarrassment, and maybe even anger, at the cost and vulnerability of having to rely on a medication to stay healthy.

After some consideration, I filled the prescription and so far – so good. On the way from the pharmacy back to the office, I purchased a fruit tart for our staff. I wanted to thank them because I *know* that if had I been someone unknown to them calling for help, they would have answered the phone with a smile and treated me with dignity. The customer service at Senior PharmAssist – how we meet people and assist them along their way – is truly a source of great pride for me and the entire team. We want our participants to know they are not alone and that we are in this wild and crazy life together. We thank all who make this work possible!

## Rogers' Drug Company Items

We are delighted to share our new "all-things-pharmacy" display in our waiting room! It features special items donated by the family of Ralph P. Rogers, Jr. Mr. Rogers collected items through the decades, including from his father's Rogers' Drug Co., in downtown Durham. It was there, working for his pharmacist father, that Ralph Jr. got a taste of his future career.

After serving in the military and attending both Duke and UNC-CH, Ralph Jr. went on to co-found NC Mutual Wholesale Drug Co., which continues as a successful pharmacist-owned company, focused on supporting independent pharmacies. We are so grateful to have these pieces of history. Please stop by to see them!

We send special thanks to Ralph and Lib Rogers and their family who have been amazing supporters for years, and to Jean and George Flowers who made this display possible.



S E N I O R  
**PHARM** *Assist*

406 Rigsbee Avenue, Suite 201  
Durham, NC 27701

919-688-4772  
www.seniorpharmassist.org  
info@seniorpharmassist.org

Follow us on social media!



We're so grateful for the help of Duke Chapel PathWays Intern Michelle Kim - we wish her all the best as she heads off to Medical School!

## Mask Up!

Over the past few months, we have been distributing N95 masks (at no charge) to our participants who want them! We received 2,400 masks from the Durham County Public Health Department, which our participants have really appreciated. We have also been reaching out to our participants to make sure they know that they can order (or we will for them) four rapid COVID tests at no charge from the federal government. This should tide folks over until the Spring, when Medicare will add coronavirus testing to its list of covered services. If you have not yet requested four tests for your household, you can complete a simple form at [www.covidtests.gov](http://www.covidtests.gov), or call 1-800-232-0233.