19th Annual Session Report of the National Silver Haired Congress August 17-20, 2017 Charlotte, NC

The Board of Directors of the National Silver Haired Congress met to discuss the business of next year’s meeting dates for the 20th Session and talk about the agenda for next year. We agreed that we would meet in the Spring of 2018 in DC for the annual session. All other discussions were simply planning ideas, with no decisions made.

Time was getting close for the Wine/Cheese Reception to follow. Nothing could have been more pleasing than to have our sponsors, Overture/Graybar, to join us along with a number of local healthcare providers such as the Centralina Area Agency on Aging in Charlotte, NC Senior TarHeel Legislators, Gaston County Council on Aging and Region F (RFAAC) Advisory Board members to join in to meet other state NSHC members to meet and talk “shop” with each other and pick up ideas to benefit groups at home. Networking is always beneficial when all participants are advocating senior issues. Even our sponsors were part of the advocating efforts. The evening was quite successful. Thank you, Overture!

After a long day of traveling and a long evening of sharing experiences, with wine or non-alcoholic peach infused cocktails in hand, every type of cheese known to man along with fresh fruits and vegetables gave everyone the relaxation needed to get a good night’s rest before the next morning’s session.

The 19th Session officially began after breakfast with the meeting gaveled in at 8:30. Bob Blancato, is our official Advisor for the NSHC. I began the session with his report.

Bob indicated in his report, that the Affordable Care Act remains the law of the land. Up to now, all legislation pertaining to the ACA has failed and there is no clear indication as to what direction it will take.

As most of you know, the budget for FY2018 begins October 1, 2017; therefore, whatever funding level a program has now will be continued for the first part of FY2018. This will be the first order of business when Congress returns to work.

According to Bob, funding for the Older Americans Act appears to be flat for next year. Except for the older workers program, no program is expected to incur cuts. Nutrition programs may be the exception to the rule, where possible increases may occur.

Lance Robertson is President Trump’s choice to be the new Assistant Secretary for Aging and Administrator of the Administration for Community Living. He will oversee most aging and disability programs.

If we are lucky, Congress will give us a 2.2% COLA (cost-of-living) increase for 2018, which comes to about $30.00 a month for most recipients. It is unclear what direction Medicare will take. Medicare Advantage plans will see no increase. Keep watch!

Bob’s up-to-date report was most informative. Thank you, Bob, for a great job!

We enjoyed watching Hannah Timmons of SC swear in 10 of the 14 new members. All were given a certificate and lapel pin to use in future meetings.

Mayor Jennifer Roberts of Charlotte, NC, joined us for breakfast. She gave a very warm welcome to all of us, explaining how Charlotte is updating their downtown infrastructure to accommodate the aging population with improvements such as leveling sidewalks, clarifying street crossings, and using smart design for getting in and out of buildings. Many types of exercise programs are available, one being bike rentals. Anyone who wishes to ride bikes to the parks all around the city may do so by renting bikes in various sites all over uptown. Bike lanes have been designated on all city streets for added safety.

Overture became our sponsor for this session. Their business is to provide “rental housing” for the 50 and over population who wish to “downsize without downgrading their lifestyle”, lower housing costs without the upkeep and care of a permanent home and still remain intact with one’s lifestyle. Overture is now the new “Active Adult Living for Today’s World”. Check out their website, liveoverture.com! You can retain your independency as long as you like. Overture was very kind to us with funding to help put this meeting together.

Mike Fenley, of Senator Richard Burr’s office, came to offer his services by telling us the most appropriate way to do our advocating next Spring, and giving us insight on how to move around Washington without all the crowds. He made suggestions toward planning a trip to the HILL next year and indicated that the Senator’s office scheduler would help us with our planning. He said to let them know as soon as we can get the hotel registration in place for the dates.

One of our most flamboyant speakers was Dr. Alan Clark, Medical Internist for the PACE program for seniors in NC. There are 14 TLC Centers including the four PACE Centers. Dr. Clark oversees all these groups. Dr. Clark spoke about the opioid addiction that is growing at alarming rates, blending humor and facts together in a Power Point presentation to show how quickly these drugs are moving across the country.

He indicated that opioid addiction mainly affects the younger age groups while the problem with seniors is pain killers and how easily they can be confused or mixed with other meds. Dr. Clark asked if anyone had a medical box to lock away their meds so no one would get into them.

**The Gaston County Council on Aging made sure that each registrant received a medical lock box to take back to their states to reinforce the idea of locking up their meds when at home or going to the doctor’s office. These boxes were quite a popular item in the meeting.**

NC Representative Beverly Earle, Vice Chairwoman of the NC Aging Commission, came by to tell us how NC is dealing with the aging numbers in NC. She brought with her a compilation of DHHS Aging & Adult Services in NC with an overview of base budget and programs. The report showed that NC is very much in compliance with the figures for the aging population. NC is matching funds with federal funds to support “aging in place” for NC seniors. The NC General Assembly over the years has been in step **without** cutting programs. A job well done, Representative Earle!

This was the ending of day one of our session. A lot of information had been absorbed and now it was time to adjourn and end the day with a baseball game.

We were able to get 20 tickets for the Charlotte Knights’, last game of the season for all who wanted to relax at the baseball stadium. SUVs picked our people up and took them to the game. We sent our NSHC nurse along with them so if anything happened such as heat problems, she could triage them until help came. (Fortunately nothing happened.) Erma Alford you did a great job! I also learned we had an EMT to help her. As a matter of fact, Perry White, our EMT, has become a new member to our group. He is the husband of Kaye White of NC, who became a new member at our last meeting. Erma and Perry decided to dedicate themselves to assisting our group as the new **medical team** for NSHC.

We did not send them to the game thirsty. On the back of each ticket was a coupon for a beer, wine, bottle of water, or soda to keep everyone happy! The SUVs returned to our hotel intact with all of our group. As a matter of fact, for those who backed out of the game, the hotel staff used the left over tickets. OFF they went and back they came, as winners!

Day 2 began with breakfast after which Norine Murphy of Illinois filled in as chaplain for the Sunday morning service.

Richard Black of Americans Against Abusive Probate Guardianship, brought to us a personal story of how he and his wife Terri, who through the death of her father, experienced a horrifying example of probate abuse in the judicial system of our country. He walked us through the process to show us how the judicial system is ripping seniors off with appointed guardians. It is very easy to become a target. It is happening all over the country, and Nevada’s court system seems to be the most notorious for stripping seniors of their assets.

Through their success, Richard and his wife have established AAAPG to help seniors and their families fight for recovery of their assets.

With the help of Senators Chuck Grassley from IA, Amy Klobuchar from MN, and John Cornyn from TX, efforts in 2015-2017 achieved inclusion of these protections in **Title V.**

**Senate bill #178** is the only thing to help stop this from happening. Call your house representatives and demand support for this bill.

Mr. and Mrs. Black gave us an “eye-opening” **1 ½** hours and answered our individual questions. This affable couple spent the rest of the session with us on Sunday.

After this speaker, we had to take a break in order to consume all that we had heard.

After lunch, Speaker Shirley Jackson of AIMS, American Insurance Marketing Solutions, came to us to explain the 4 parts of Medicare.

There are 2 main ways to get your Medicare Coverage:

**The Original Medicare:** Part A (hospital); and/or Part B (medical insurance, Doctor); plus Part D, (prescription drug coverage). And /or Medigap or Supplemental coverage (20% plan) to complete coverage.

**Medicare Advantage:** Part C (hospital); AND Part B (medical). Most Advantage plans cover prescription drugs.

**A word of advice:** If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you cannot use and cannot be sold a Medigap Policy (supplemental coverage).

I never realized how seniors can get tripped up on their Medicare Coverage. Hopefully each of us now better understands how to relate to other seniors in our groups at home.

Break was upon us and therefore, we ran. Our brains were getting fried with all the knowledge we were absorbing.

The conclusion of the seminar had arrived and it was time for Congresswoman Alma Adams to speak. It took a few minutes to get her into the hotel because of security. She was running late with “detour traffic” running rampant on roads around Charlotte. Once Ms. Adams was inside the meeting room, the doors were locked.

Congresswoman Alma Adams had been in the NC Assembly for ten terms in our state house. She decided during that time that she needed a trademark. Hats seemed to be her fetish and as it went, hats became her trademark. She told the story of a time when protesters were on the streets and she wanted to be a part of the process. She managed to be handcuffed and taken to jail. The processor asked her to remove her hat but she resisted because that was her trademark. After several requests to remove her hat, she finally did. After that, her hat was only removed at home. To this day, the congresswoman is quite famous for her hats. If one did not know better, he or she would think she and the Queen of England were in a “hat” race!

Congresswoman Adams was elected to go to Congress after winning a special election in 2014 because of the redrawing of the 12th district. She became the 100th woman elected to Congress, the most in US history. In 2016, she was elected to a second term.

This very special person serves in Congress and has committed her support of the Older Americans Act and will create ways to help seniors to age in place with funding for programs to maintain a dignified lifestyle. She is one of the newest members of Congress and already she has opened the doors for seniors to be educated so they know where to go for help if needed. The National Silver Haired Congress welcomes the support of Congresswoman Alma Adams of NC.

WE had had a “loaded” itinerary. Now it was time to go to our rooms and relax for a few minutes to get ready for the final event, DINNER!

Dinner was the last event for the session, and we took that time to honor “LUE” Chandler with a special plaque for her long-time efforts of being loyal to seniors by fighting for their healthcare and well-being and helping push through legislation to keep seniors aging in place to maintain a dignified lifestyle. As a founding member of the National Silver Haired Congress, her commitment goes above and beyond. In her 93 years of maturity, she still keeps believing that she is “making a difference”. That is her legacy, and she IS making a difference!

What a weekend!! Great food by Chef Mike, great accommodations and, most important, great people!

This weekend was special because the website afforded us this opportunity. Most things that happened in session came by means of the website. We should always maintain that site so we can continue to have opportunities as valuable and helpful as those in this session. That is how we got a sponsor and many of our speakers. I have been told how dignified and professional the site looks.

Thank you for your support in helping me pull this session together! You are truly appreciated!

That’s all folks!! Shirley