Washington County Regional Medical Center Adopts Medicare Made Easy Events
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The Washington County Archway Partnership Health Committee conducted a community-wide health needs assessment that determined Medicare options were not clearly defined for participants. This assessment found that Medicare patients and health care providers held concerns about the difficulties of choosing the proper health care plan. The Central Savannah River Area Agency on Aging and Georgia Cares formed a partnership to provide support and outreach for Medicare enrollees. In an effort to offer unbiased, individualized information about Medicare health options and to allow easier access for residents to attain this information, the CRSA Agency on Aging, Georgia Cares, local organizations, and local volunteers organized an inaugural “Medicare Made Easy” event in 2009.

The first event was held at the Oconee Fall Line Technical College (formerly known as Sandersville Technical College) and attracted more than 70 Medicare patients with over 30 volunteers. Undergraduate and graduate students representing UGA’s College of Public Health and College of Pharmacy contributed their time and talents to this first event as well through best practice research, local marketing, and counseling clients.

The event has grown each year as the fourth annual event took place at the OFTC in November 2012. The community officially took ownership as the WCRMC, OFTC, Source Care Management, and the CRSA Agency on Aging collaborated and sponsored the event. Undergraduate students at UGA’s College of Public Health took part in the event as well.

To sustain this program, the Washington County Regional Medical Center offered to adopt the Medicare Made Easy events and hold them during the annual WCRMC Health Fair. This will offer more notoriety for the events, be more accessible to a larger population, and it fits well with the WCRMC mission.

For the events, attendees are asked to bring their current prescriptions and Medicare Red, White, and Blue card. This assists the volunteers who offer 15-30 minute counseling sessions to identify and compare health plans to better meet the individuals’ needs. This allowed participants to determine if their current plan is the best option for them, or if a more affordable plan could be obtained. Participants are able to choose and sign up for new plans on site. The event will continue to be held annually.

Advancing Community Priorities: The Washington County Archway Partnership established that community health was a top priority in 2008. It was also determined that “increasing access to health care professionals” was part of that priority. Since the WCRMC adopted the event, this will give residents even better access to the local health care professionals and will help provide more personal relationships. The Medicare Made Easy events will provide residents in Washington County with individualized healthcare information that will better prepare their families which is a step towards a healthier community.