

What's New for 2010?

Are you a "Junior Senior?" and Vietnam Veterans Benefits Expanded, Spousal Impoverishment Figures for 2010

If you are between 60 and 75 years of age, you are a different generation than the "Greatest Generation" - those over 75. The "Junior Seniors" are interested in activities that maintain the mind and body experience. "Junior Seniors" are attracted to Tai Chi, Yoga, and meditation.

Sandra Hakanson invented the term "Junior Senior." She is the Director of the Mascoutah Senior Center, which recently won the 2009 Governor's Hometown Award for Senior Citizen Involvement. The "Junior Seniors" in Mascoutah recently hosted a wine and cheese party. Such activities are different than senior centers that originally were more centered around bingo and playing cards, according to Hakanson.

Volunteering among "Junior Seniors" indicates a trend away from long-term commitments to clubs with more of an emphasis on projects with a defined beginning and end. Whatever the involvement, people of all ages have time and much talent to contribute to make this world a better place. As Hakanson notes, people lead more meaningful lives when they are able to use a lifetime of experiences and skills to help others. Participating at any level with a sense of community battles the isolation and loneliness that can plague later years.

If you Google the term "Junior Seniors" there is a wealth of information about high school Junior/Senior Proms. Thanks to Sandra, it looks like we're ahead of the curve on this one.

Other trends to look for in the New Year in the senior arena include changes to Veteran's benefits for Vietnam Veterans and their surviving spouses and Medicaid Spousal Impoverishment figures.

MAJOR news for our **Vietnam Veterans** is the decision on October 13, 2009 to establish service connection with three conditions, namely **Parkinson's, B-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart**

disease. These join the already established conditions of diabetes type II, acute and sub-acute peripheral neuropathy, chloracne and porphyria cutanea tarda, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, prostate and respiratory cancers, Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and multiple myeloma and soft tissue sarcoma, acute.

This is major news for our Vietnam veterans who suffer with any of these diseases and for the surviving spouses of Vietnam veterans who died of any of these diseases. For a surviving spouse, the veteran's death certificate should list one of these diseases as the causes of death or the cause of death must be linked to one of these diseases.

The decision to add the three new conditions is based on evidence linking the conditions to exposure to Agent Orange, a herbicide sprayed in Vietnam. The VA typically requires proof of "boot on the ground," in most cases, or proof of direct exposure to Agent Orange. Veterans and surviving spouses who qualify for these benefits are urged to submit a claim to lock in a retro-active payment date. Spread the word about these new developments to anyone you know who served in Vietnam or to a widow of a Vietnam veteran.

For anyone with a spouse entering a long-term care facility in 2010, note that in a first, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have announced that with no increase in the consumer price index that there will be no increase in the community spouse resource allowance (CSRA) and the maximum monthly maintenance needs allowance for 2010 under the **MEDICAID SPOUSAL IMPOVERISHMENT STANDARDS for 2010**. The figures for 2009 will remain in effect for 2010 as follows: \$109,560 is the community spouse resource allowance and \$2,739 is the maximum monthly maintenance needs allowance.

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