



December 2011

## **National Family Caregiver Month Observed**

AgeOptions Caring Together, Living Better (CTLB) caregiver support program observed National Family Caregivers Month in November with several events for volunteers and partner organizations.

The events included caregiver appreciation luncheons at Victory Christian Assembly in Markham and Shekinah Chapel in Riverdale, a power of attorney presentation at the Markham Senior Center and a resource fair hosted by Kizer Memorial Church of God in Christ. In addition, Metropolitan Family Services announced a new caregiver support group in Blue Island, and AgeOptions and the CTLB local partners worked with village and city halls to have them enact formal proclamations.

CTLB is a partnership among social service providers and faith-based institutions to support low-income African-American caregivers in the south suburbs of Chicago. The program, which started in 2009, is funded in part by a grant to AgeOptions from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation.

Each of the south suburban partners developed innovative volunteer-based caregiver support programs designed to meet the needs of their communities. They provide services such as meal delivery, in-home and onsite respite care, transportation, support groups and educational workshops.

AgeOptions expanded CTLB's volunteer respite program this year with a Legacy Corps grant funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service and administered by the University of Maryland. Part of AmeriCorps, Legacy Corps matches older adult volunteers with families caring for older adults.

Since last spring, AgeOptions has recruited, trained and matched 12 Legacy Corps members with 15 caregivers, for whom they have already provided more than 600 hours of respite care. This is in addition to the more than 400 respite hours provided by other CTLB volunteers.

CTLB has also collaborated with the Alzheimer's Association, the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center and local mayors to host several recent outreach events, including a ministers breakfast in Markham and a senior and caregiver forum in Riverdale.

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The organizations also worked with State Rep. Will Davis to convene a hearing of the Illinois House of Representatives Committee on Health and Healthcare Disparities, which Rep. Davis chairs. The purpose of the outreach events and the hearing was to provide education on both Alzheimer's disease and caregiving, and their impact on the south suburbs and other low-income, minority communities.

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn issued a proclamation declaring November 2012 Illinois Family Caregivers Month. AgeOptions and the other members of the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging advocated for the proclamation, which includes facts and figures about caregiving, including the financial, physical and emotion costs to caregivers, the economic value of caregiving and the cost of lost productivity to businesses. Click here to read the proclamation:

<http://www.ageoptions.org/newsandviews/documents/CaregiversMonthproclamation.pdf>.

Those statistics and more are also available on the National Family Caregivers Association website:

[http://www.nfcares.org/who\\_are\\_family\\_caregivers/care\\_giving\\_statistics.cfm](http://www.nfcares.org/who_are_family_caregivers/care_giving_statistics.cfm).