



NYSAAAA & Dignity Memorial™ present

SmartNews



April/May/June 2002

EVENTS

June 4-5: "Aging Concerns Unite Us" Conference, Holiday Inn, Syracuse/ Liverpool

~~~~~

August 7: NYSAAAA Board Meeting  
Greene County OFA

~~~~~

October 15-17
Leadership Institute
Woodcliff Lodge,
Rochester, NY
www.woodcliffodge.com

SmartNews is the publication of the proud partnership between Dignity Memorial™ Funeral Providers and the New York State Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Please contact us at:

Dignity Memorial™
www.dignitymemorial.com
www.smartandsafe.com

~~~~~

New York State Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
266 Hudson Ave.  
Albany NY 12210  
(518)449-7080  
Fax (518)449-7055  
Email: [office@nysaaaa.org](mailto:office@nysaaaa.org)  
Web site: [www.nysaaaa.org](http://www.nysaaaa.org)

## Smart & Safe Seniors® Presenters Encounter Challenges/Rewards

As the Smart and Safe Seniors® Program enters it's "second generation," we wanted to talk to those individuals most directly responsible for the program's success—the Smart & Safe Seniors® presenters.

These dedicated men and women have taken the time to learn the ins and outs of the safety modules, scheduled around all kinds of crazy logistical requirements and trooped

out into the community come what may: rain, shine, mah-jong or rice pudding day, because they believe in the product they are delivering and have a true connection to the welfare of their community. But we discovered a funny thing during our series of interviews; not only did the presenters feel that their audiences derived a benefit from the program, but they themselves felt the experience enhanced their own sense of well being.

The Smart and Safe Seniors® program is unique in that it doesn't "talk down" to its audience. The program presenters are careful to keep in mind the following background:

Crime prevention and personal safety are matters of making common sense choices. Common sense is far more effective and powerful than a handgun, a can of pepper spray, an expensive alarm system or a black belt in a martial art. Smart choices pave the way from potential danger to safety.

*"Smart choices are the number one resource in crime prevention"*

The ability to make smart informed choices is a hallmark of the senior generation, more so than any other. Although there are a lot of things about us that change as we progressively grow older, the ability to make smart choices is one that actually improves with age. The more life experience we gain, the better our ability to make smart choices. Since smart choices are the number one resource in crime prevention and personal safety, this actually means that as one grows older, the ability to improve your safety factor increases.

This positive approach to the audience is a hallmark of the Smart and Safe Seniors® program. According to the presenters, it is this philosophy which is responsible for the unique acceptance of the program and its ever increasing suc-

cess.

### In their own words

We began by compiling a series of background questions, centering around a typical Smart & Safe Seniors® presentation. We wanted to determine why programs were scheduled where they were, what the differences in the audience would be, any challenges to presenting the program and audience response. We also investigated the components of the program itself, i.e. training requirements and areas of safety covered. Additionally, we asked about any surprises they might have encountered, success stories they wanted to share, and the effect of the Smart & Safe Seniors® program in a building community relations.

We began our interview at the 2001 Leadership Institute in Corning. (see next page)



Look for Smart & Safe Seniors® across NY

## Spotlight on *Ardelle Kasdan*

*How do you determine where to schedule a Smart and Safe Seniors® Program?*

Usually the Senior centers are sent a packet detailing what the program offers, then the center contacts Dignity Memorial™, and a presenter who works in that community is sent.

*What are the differences that you have encountered with the various audiences and locations?*

When I do the program downstate in NYC, I have a lot of seniors who are currently living in apartments, so the thought of talking about a break in, safety in the home is not as important to them right now as worrying about being duped and scammed. Whether it's by phone call or in their house or when they go out in the community, because these are people who are walking to the supermarket, they're walking to the bank, they're out and physically in great shape. They're all over the community, they're very involved and this is where the con artists can really prey on them because they can find them anywhere.

Usually the director of the senior center can choose which module we present. Since we have multiple modules, we can offer that choice. Lately, I've had more requests for the Cons & Scams piece.

*What challenges have you experienced in presenting the program? Is*

*there a difference in presenting to an older audience?*

I find that in working with seniors on programs like this, they're very sharp active people. They're very aware astute adults. They're older, but that's the only difference. Because they've lived that much longer, they have much more to share and to offer us. Very often we come away learning something from them because they've been around a little bit longer, and they've seen things that those of us who are younger haven't yet seen. And they can offer knowledge based on that life experience.

*What have been some of the audience responses to the Smart and Safe Seniors® program?*

I find that every time I do the program, I share more information that I may have not had a chance to express before. Often when we're talking to the seniors after the program, the conversation will spur me to talk about another aspect that I didn't cover in the formal presentation.

*Have you had any surprises during a presentation?*

When I first started doing this I was amazed at how many people have been conned in their lifetime, or someone close to them had been. I'm not as shocked by it now. I wait for someone to come forward and tell me their story. It helps reassure me that this program is helping people to be a little

sharper, a little more aware, and to trust their instincts, because they really have it in them to help themselves.

*What training requirements did you need to become a certified presenter?*

It's a two to three day intensive process. I trained with Bob Stuber, among a 20-odd group from all over the United States and Canada. You don't learn a script—you learn the concepts behind the module. It makes it easier to customize it to our community. We can enhance it with stories about what has happened to us or people we know. And once we start doing the program, the seniors add their own unique stories, to add to the collective lesson. If we can teach all of the basic underpinnings, if we can teach them to think like a criminal, they will re-look at things they already know.

*How does the program assist you in building community relations?*

There's enormous respect back and forth. You're giving honest truth, one adult to another about something that's vital to their lives. When you make that honest connection with a senior— that's great, I love it! That kind of a connection with a senior empowers all of us. And they walk away from the program feeling good about themselves, sure about themselves and they certainly want us to come back again, because they like the way we treat them, the way we talk with them the way we work with them.



Ardelle, you're a star!

## "Aging Concerns Unite Us"

This year's "Aging Concerns Unite Us" Conference was held June 4-5, 2002 at the Syracuse/Liverpool Holiday Inn. Once again, **Dignity Memorial™** was our **Millennium Partner**. Many thanks to them for their ongoing support. Dignity-Memorial™'s generous support enables us to provide quality educational opportunities such as this to both our members and all those who are concerned about the fu-

ture of aging services in New York State.

At the Association meeting, Ardelle Kasdan presented the newest Smart & Safe Seniors® module: "Out and About."

Watch for more extensive coverage of this, as well as conference highlights, in our next issue of SmartNews.

