

1941 SOUTH 42ND ST
SUITE #312
OMAHA, NEBRASKA
68105

STAFF

Toni Roberts.....Executive Director
Karen Didion...Operations Manager
Kae Turco....Volunteer Coordinator
Diana Palmer.....Office Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS

Mike Carsey.....President
Barb Rizvi.....Vice President
Barry Gerken.....Secretary
Charlie Graham.....Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Rick Scofield Gary Green
C.J. Guenzel Jeff Smith
Susan Whitfield

HOURS

MONDAY-FRIDAY
8:30AM-4:30PM

OUR MISSION

EMPOWER SENIORS WITH
THE KNOWLEDGE AND
CONFIDENCE TO MAKE
INFORMED DECISIONS
ABOUT THEIR BENEFITS.

www.vas-nebraska.org
402-444-6617

Follow us on Facebook,
Twitter and LinkedIn



Spring/Summer 2023

— VOLUNTEERS — ASSISTING SENIORS

Helping seniors navigate the complex worlds of Medicare and Homestead Exemption.

We Love Our Volunteers!

April was national Volunteer Appreciation month. We could not do anything at VAS without all of our wonderful volunteers.

We would like to say a very big "Thank You!!" to every one of our volunteers. We appreciate all of your hard work throughout the year.



Interested in Volunteering?

There are so many ways to get involved at VAS. Most of our volunteers are SHIP trained, but there are also opportunities to volunteer without SHIP training. Non-SHIP roles include counseling for Homestead Exemption and some Office Support opportunities.

The Nebraska SHIP/SMP program, that VAS is a member of, offers many opportunities for volunteering. You can choose which topics interest you the most and be trained in those areas. Topics include:

- **Medicare counseling:**
 - Provide one-on-one counseling specific to topics of interest (including Medicare Part D, Medicare Advantage, or Fraud)
 - Overall Comprehensive Medicare Counseling
- **Fraud Presentations and Outreach:**
 - Become a Fraud Warrior and assist in gathering information and submitting reports
 - Provide presentations to public groups/organizations
 - Provide one-on-one education

- **Public Speaking:**
 - Provide *Welcome to Medicare* classes
 - Manage informational booths at off-site events
- **Office Support/Data Entry:**
 - Assist in answering multi-line phones
 - Schedule appointments
 - Enter data in program reporting system
- **Brochure Distribution:**
 - Connect with community partners to display SHIP/SMP resources

If you, or someone you know, is interested in volunteering, please contact Toni at 402-444-6617 or director@vas-nebraska.org to start the application process. Applications are also available on our website:

vas-nebraska.org/volunteer/applications-and-forms/

Included on the link page above is the 2023 SHIP Volunteer Booklet, which includes the qualifications and requirements to be a volunteer.



Homestead Exemption Applications Due June 30

June means we are at the end of the Homestead Exemption application period. Applications are due to your county's Assessor's office on June 30. If you are disabled or are over 65 and meet income requirements, you may qualify for some property tax relief.

VAS will have appointments to help fill out applications until June 30, so if you or someone you know still needs to apply, please make an appointment today by calling our office at 402-444-6617.

For income information, click [here](#).

Please Support VAS during Give65: July 11-14

Volunteers Assisting Seniors is participating in Home Instead Charities' Give65 event in July. The money raised during this event will help fund our Medicare and Homestead Exemption assistance programs. Last fiscal year, VAS helped seniors in our community save over \$2.8 million. Our services are critical for those dealing with fixed incomes and the rising costs of goods and services.

If you, or anyone you know, has used our services in the past, please consider supporting VAS during this year's Give65 Event (July 11-14).

The Give65 event starts Tuesday, July 11 at 8:00am CDT and ends at 1:00am CDT July 14.

If you donate early in the event, your gift has a chance to be matched by Home Instead Charities. VAS is eligible for up to \$5000 in matching funds.

For more information, please click here: [VAS Fundraising Campaign](#)

Your generous support helps to make our mission possible.



New to Medicare Workshops

- Are you approaching Medicare age and confused about your Medicare options?
- Are you currently employed and not sure how Medicare works with your employer insurance?
- Are you a caregiver for your parents and have questions about their Medicare coverage?

Medicare can be confusing and the decisions you make at initial enrollment may be hard to change later. This workshop will explain Medicare in simple, easy to understand terms to help you to make informed decisions about your Medicare options. The workshop is free, but due to limited space, advanced registration is required. Call Volunteers Assisting Seniors at (402) 444-6617 to register.

VAS is now offering New to Medicare workshops at 3 locations. Monthly workshops are held at Calvary Christian Church in Bellevue and at New Cassel Retirement Center in Omaha while bimonthly workshops are now offered at Metro Community College's Digital Express at the North Omaha Campus. All workshops are from 6:30-8:00pm. Dates are as follows:

- Calvary Christian Church North Bldg; 10100 Cedar Island Dr, Bellevue: June 13, July 11, August 8 and September 12
- New Cassel Retirement Center Auditorium; 900 N90th St, Omaha: June 21, July 19, August 16 and September 20
- Metro Community College Digital Express; 5300 N30th St, Bldg 10, Omaha: July 6 and September 7 (for sessions at MCC, please register with the college at 531-622-2000)



June 30: Last Day
Homestead
Applications due to
County Assessor's office

July 11 8am-July 14 1am:
Give 65 donation event

October 15-December 7:
Annual Medicare Open
Enrollment



New to Medicare
Workshop Dates:

Omaha
New Cassel 90th & Dodge:
June 21
July 19
August 16
September 20

Digital Express at MCC North
Omaha; 30th and Fort
July 6
September 7

Bellevue
Calvary Christian Church
-North Building
June 13
July 11
August 8
September 12

*All times are 6:30-8:00pm



MEDICARE NEWS



Medicare Coverage and COVID-19

The COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ended on May 11, 2023. This may affect your Medicare coverage for some services.

COVID-19 testing

- Original Medicare no longer covers over-the-counter at-home tests
- Original Medicare will continue to cover PCR and antigen tests that are ordered by a physician or other health care provider with no out-of-pocket costs to you
- Medicare Advantage Plans must cover the same tests as Original Medicare, but may charge out-of-pocket costs and may continue to cover OTC at-home tests. Contact your plan to learn what is covered and what costs may be incurred

COVID-19 vaccine

- Part B covers COVID-19 vaccines and boosters at no cost to you

Telehealth benefits

- **Until December 31, 2024** Medicare will cover telehealth visits for both rural and urban residents in both home and health care settings
- Medicare Advantage Plans must cover telehealth services as well. Contact your plans to learn about costs and coverage.
- **After December 31, 2024** coverage for telehealth benefits may be more limited.

Contact us at 402-444-6617 if you need help understanding what Medicare covers and how to access care

Medicare Cracks Down on Misleading Marketing Schemes

In April, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), finalized a regulation for marketing Medicare Advantage plans. The regulation goes into effect on September 30th of 2023 and targets misleading marketing schemes.

Medicare Advantage (MA) plans are the private insurance alternative to Original Medicare. To get people to join, MA advertisements sometimes use celebrities to lead consumers to believe they represent the federal government. A new rule from Medicare prohibits ads that mislead individuals. Use of the Medicare name is limited and images of the Medicare card in marketing materials or ads are prohibited. The regulation also makes it clear that an advertisement for MA must specify the name of the plan it is trying to get older adults to join. There are also provisions about brokers, insurance agents, and others who market MA plans.

It is estimated that around 50% of Medicare enrollees use Medicare Advantage plans, and that number is increasing. The new rules will limit the use of overly broad statements in advertising and must state the plan that is being advertised.

The new rule also requires all who market MA plans to fully explain the coverage and benefits of plans and to make sure the benefits are actually available in the state or county where a consumer lives. It also limits the time an agent or salesperson can contact a potential enrollee to sell them an Advantage plan.

For more information, please read the full [AARP story](#).



June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

Partner Organization News

AARP NE Information Center is open

The AARP NE Information Center, located inside the Center Mall, Suite 220, was reopened in mid-February after being closed due to the pandemic.

The center is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10 am to 4 pm. The Information Center has pamphlets, brochures and information for the 55+ community. They also have copies of the AARP Magazine and a lending library.

Monthly programs will be restarted in June. Programs will be held at the Information Center. Topics and dates will be published in the June New Horizons (a publication of ENOA.)

Spotlight on ENOA



- The Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA) publishes a monthly newsletter, New Horizons. It is available for free to those over age 60 in Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Washington, and Cass counties. For those outside of the five-county region, the subscription is \$5 annually. The newsletter contains information for seniors and caregivers, helping seniors connect to resources in the area offering a wide range of services.
- "ENOA's role is to ensure that older adults have access to a continuum of services that help them to remain active, independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. ENOA serves as a gateway to aging services that already exist in the community and also operates its own programs that fill previously unmet needs in the five-county area."

Toni's Tidbits

Hello!

Exciting news! The Board of Directors had a retreat a couple of weeks ago and started the STRATEGIC PLANNING process for 2023-2026. Priorities were identified and we are ready to define our goals. Are you interested in helping us with this process? We'd love to get your input! Look at the list of strategic directions below and see if there is an area that fits your interests and skills. Then, if you are interested, please email me at director@vas-nebraska.org.

1. Organization Identity
2. Staff, Board, and Volunteers
3. Outreach, Awareness, and Programs
4. Funding and Facilities

We met on May 17th for our Spring Training. What a great day! We learned a lot and it was wonderful to meet and welcome Jonathan Burlison, the NE SHIP Executive Director. Mike Carsey, our SHIP Rep, did a fantastic job of guiding us through the basics and all of the updates. Jonathan's presentation on STARS helped us all understand the importance of consistently and accurately documenting our work.

If you are part of an organization, group, church, etc. that would like information about any of our VAS programs, either through a presentation or with flyers and print material, please let me know. We would love to meet with your group or send information to them, it's a great way to spread the word. Note: We only have about 4 weeks left for Homestead Exemption Application Assistance. Please let us know if you know of a group or organization that might be interested in getting some information: karen@vas-nebraska.org.

More exciting news! There are SHIP/VAS Bus Wraps now traveling the Omaha streets! To see what they look like, click [here](#). Please let me know if you see one around town!

Important note: We still have two positions posted: Office Manager and Program Director. If you know someone that might be interested, the job descriptions are posted on our website: <https://vas-nebraska.org/medicare/careers/>.

Best regards,

--*Toni Roberts*



Have a Happy and Safe

4th OF July

