



Rhode Island
Alliance
for Retired
Americans ©

HealthLink Wellness
"Taking Control"



Mission Statement

The Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans

John A. Pernorio, RI ARA President

The mission of the Rhode Island Alliance for Retired Americans is to ensure social and economic justice and full civil rights for all citizens so that they may enjoy lives of dignity, personal and family fulfillment and security. The RI Alliance believes that all older and retired persons have a responsibility to strive to create a society that incorporates these goals and rights and that retirement provides them with opportunities to pursue new and expanded activities with their unions, civic organizations and their communities.

We have accomplished goals that help our members, both labor and community based. We have had legislation enacted called RI Best RX to help with the high cost of medications, especially in the Medicare Part D donut hole of no coverage and pharmacy uninsured Rhode Islanders. We have also endorsed the HealthLink Wellness program to help members live a healthier life and sponsored both the HealthLink Wellness Health Fair and its quarterly screenings. Among some of our other accomplishments is the creation of a social network for retirees to communicate with other retirees. Our website www.newenglandsenior.com provides valuable information for our members so they can be better informed citizens. We will continue to build a strong organization of seniors with a viable structure, ample resources and clear objectives, a structure compatible with that of the labor movement and community-based groups at local, state and national levels.

Our programs and membership organizations are designed to promote a commitment by retired workers and older persons to the concept of lifelong participation in their unions, and in their community, political and civic organizations. We encourage all segments of the senior population to act with unity on legislative, political and policy issues of importance to retirees and their families in order to maximize their influence on federal, state and local governments and on private organizations that affect their interests.

HealthLink Wellness is but one example of cooperation between labor, political, community and private organizations working together to make life more enjoyable. In the future, we hope to expand the growth of projects like HealthLink to educate our members so that they have a more informed opinion to make qualified decisions.

HealthLink Wellness Health Fair – A Great Success

John A. Pernorio – President Rhode Island ARA

Dr. Joseph Boffa – Director HealthLink Wellness Program

The Health Fair held on June 23rd was a great success. It was the first time since the 2001 health fair that all members of HealthLink Wellness had come together at the same place. There were also individuals who were new to the program on that day. Approximately 265 HealthLink members and guests participated in the day's events not only to participate in the health screenings **but also to commiserate with fellow members and greet and talk to invited guests from Rhode Island and Washington D.C.**

Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy is greeted by HealthLink Members



We would like to make special mention of our brothers and sisters of United Nurses and Allied Professionals Inc. for their support and help in planning for the health fair. Several of their members volunteered to help us with the blood pressure and BMI screenings and counseling to review members' results. We do appreciate their dedication, not only to their profession, but also to the community.

The original design for the HealthLink Wellness agenda was to have regional screenings at local community settings based on the community benefit concept. We knew from our surveys and focus groups our members do take seriously and are motivated to take control of their health. HealthLink Wellness provides opportunities for additional health monitoring beyond what they receive from their doctor and opportunity to participate in wellness activities such as walking clubs and health education programs. Its activities are specifically designed to take place in a friendlier local community setting. The purpose is not only to reach out to the local community but to form the building blocks of a culture of prevention and wellness.

The health fair and rally has a different purpose. It is a time for not only HealthLink members to come together but for the sponsoring organizations to pull together for this one event. It is very important for our sponsoring organizations to keep current with their tie in with both the needs and goals of our agenda. Organizational support from groups such as the Rhode Island ARA, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and funding from PhRMA were critical in the development of the HealthLink Wellness agenda. The agenda of the health fair still involves chronic disease same as the local screenings but because of the larger numbers involved cancer screenings become more practical. Tests that were added to our list at this year's health fair were PSA testing for prostate cancer and oral cancer screening. In fact the oral health/cancer screening was so popular with our members that Dr. Boffa, Director of the HealthLink Wellness Program, and fellow Boston University faculty member, Dr. Ana Karina Mascarenhas are discussing the option of incorporating oral health programs as a regular feature of our ongoing local regional screenings.

*Oral Health/Cancer Screening Station
Graduate Students and Faculty from the Boston University
Goldman School of Dental Medicine prepare for the screening*



Besides the expanded screening agenda, the health fair is also an opportunity for members to meet others who are active at different regional screening centers, to socialize and share ideas relating to the concept of "Taking Control", the motto of the HealthLink Wellness program. At the local community screenings we literally mean members need to take control of their health. We help by offering a local community setting for the basic set of screenings for chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and elevated cholesterol. The opportunity is for a one on one help and guidance. In addition at each location we offer health education workshops and walking clubs to enhance each member's ability to follow the path of prevention. The agenda at the health fair does include the same set of basic medical screenings.

*Blood Analysis Screening Center
Blood Glucose and Lipids are Monitored.*



At this health fair we also invited sponsors to have an exhibit table. Eli Lilly, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, The Point, Absolute Respiratory Care, Pace, Home Stead Senior Care, Care New England Home Health, Mass MedLine & Butler Hospital all had tables at the health fair.

*Our Lady of Fatima Hospital's Table
One of HealthLink's Partners*



At the regional health fair “Taking Control” has an additional meaning. Our goal is also to invite leaders in health, labor and politics to join us and to meet with our members. In order for our members to take control of programs such as Medicare, so important to their lives, they need to be able to converse with leaders from many fields to obtain a firm understanding of the issues involved. At the June health fair representatives from the Rhode Island AFL-CIO were in attendance. Representative Patrick J. Kennedy took time from his busy schedule to join us. We should add he was instrumental in obtaining the original funding for HealthLink's CDC funded project and has consistently been a strong proponent of prevention. Also, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, who supports the HealthLink Wellness project, had some of his staff attend. Mr. Edward Coyle, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans and Carl “Hands” Poulette, Eastern Regional Director, Department of Retiree Affairs, International Brotherhood

of Teamsters, both flew in from Washington D.C. to be in attendance. Activities with our guests included a video recording of panel discussions among HealthLink staff and invited guests. The panel discussions will be aired on the program “Labor Vision” which is part of the State Interconnection available on Cox channel fourteen. We would also like to thank the Teamsters Local 170 Retirees Club from Worcester, Mass for their participation.

Health Fair Pictorial

Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy and John A. Pernorio, RI ARA President

Discuss the Issues of Prevention and Wellness Programs



Below Panel Discussion

Left to Right: Roger Boudreau, Institute for Labor Studies & Research

Edward Coyle, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans

Dr. Joseph Boffa, RI ARA Medical Programs Director

**Carl “Hands” Poulette, Eastern Regional Director,
International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Dept. of Retiree Affairs**





Pictures:

Top Left, Eli Lilly, Top Right, The Point

Center Left, Care New England Home Health, Center Right, MassMedLine

Bottom Left, Butler Hospital, Bottom Right, Absolute Respiratory Care, Inc.