



Friends
in Action

Connections



Sponsored by

FRESHWATER
STONE

Friends in Action News & Programs

Published by Friends in Action • 5 General Moore Way (located within the Moore Community Center) • Ellsworth, ME 04605
Tel 207-664-6016 • Email: info@friendsinactionellsworth.org

February 2025

Veterans Directed Care Program

Many are not aware that the Veterans Directed Care (VDC) is authorized and available in Maine. The program is administered through the Togus VA Medical Center, located in Augusta, which is part of the VA Maine Healthcare System.

By participating in the VDC program, Maine veterans can exercise greater autonomy over their long-term care, enabling them to live independently in their communities while receiving

personalized support tailored to their needs.

Benefits of Veterans Directed Care:

- **Independence:** Veterans retain control over their care decisions, promoting dignity and self-reliance.
- **Community Living:** The program supports veterans in staying in their homes and communities, which is often preferred over institutional care.

- **Customized Care:** Veterans receive services that align with their individual preferences and circumstances.

- **Support for Family Caregivers:** By allowing family members to serve as paid caregivers, the program provides financial and emotional support to families.

Key Features of Veterans

Directed Care:

1. **Self-Directed Model:** Veterans have the ability to

manage their own care, including selecting the services they need and hiring the individuals who provide them.

2. **Budget Allocation:** Veterans are provided with a flexible budget based on their assessed care needs. They can use these funds to purchase services or pay for caregiving assistance.

3. **Caregiver Selection:** Veterans can hire caregivers of

Continued on Page 2

From the Director - A Year of Gratitude and Accomplishments

First and foremost, a huge thank you to everyone who supported Friends in Action during

2024: our volunteers, donors, and grantors. Through your generosity and hard work, we exceeded our goals and made a significant contribution to helping older residents throughout the county live independently and thrive with a strong quality of life.

Our 2024 Achievements

We are proud to share some highlights of what we accomplished together:

- **Support for Clients:** Provided assistance to over 1,300 registered clients.
- **Transportation Services:** Completed more than 6,500 trips, covering nearly 70,000 miles, the majority driven by dedicated volunteers.
- **Essential Deliveries:** Delivered over 500 grocery orders,

prescription medications, and other necessities.

- **Hot Meal Services:** Served more than 3,000 meals in our cafeteria and delivered over 8,500 hot meals to housebound clients.

- **Senior Center Programs:** Hosted more than 11,000 visits to the Senior Center for entertainment, education, enrichment programs, and assistance with government services such as Medicare, Social Security, and tax preparation.

- **Community Collaborations:** Partnered with 14 other nonprofit organizations to present community programs.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2025

Building on the successes of 2024, we aim to maintain or expand our programs while introducing new initiatives to support the health and well-being of our clients. Here's a glimpse of our plans:

1. Enhanced Transportation Services:

- Launch a volunteer recruitment initiative focused on increasing both the number and geographic distribution of volunteers.
- Establish satellite coordination centers to enable more localized support. Collaborations with Healthy Island Project and Bucksport Bay Healthy Community Coalition are underway to establish the first two satellite centers.

2. Cross-Generational Gardening Program:

- Rebuild and expand our raised garden beds.
- Facilitate a partnership between older adults and children from the YMCA daycare to grow vegetables for use in the Moore Center kitchen. This program will promote intergenerational connection, combat isolation for older gardeners,

Continued on Page 2

Friends in Action Board of Directors

President

Charlotte Stetson

Vice President

Candy Gammel

Treasurer

Ross Baldree

Secretary

Mary Ann Lock

Members

Zach McNally

Kevin Davidson

Tammy Nabozny

Chris Popper

Deb Leavitt

Kathleen S. Hughes

Lawrence Johnston

Maureen Giunta



Director’s Letter Cont.

Continued from Page 1

and teach children about food sources.

3. **Revitalized Non-Transportation Services:**

- Reintroduce and expand services such as friendly calls and visits, light household chores, minor maintenance, and wheelchair ramp installations.
- Partner with Ellsworth High School and Hancock County Technical Center to engage students. This initiative will offer students opportunities to fulfill community service requirements or gain practical experience in their chosen fields.

4. **Increased Senior Center Utilization:**

- Expand community group activities, including bridge, mahjong, cribbage, writing, painting, and other enrichment opportunities.
- Offer additional educational programs and expert

consultations on Medicare, Social Security, and tax preparation.

Sustaining Our Mission

Our ability to achieve these goals depends on resources. While we are fortunate to have a loyal and generous donor base, as well as supportive business sponsors, current funding enables us to serve only about 20% of the potential client base. To bridge this gap, we are introducing new initiatives:

- **Sponsorship Opportunities:** Businesses and individuals can sponsor key Senior Center programs.
- **Friends Forever Society:** This planned giving program allows supporters to preserve their legacy by making a bequest to Friends in Action.

Stay tuned for more details on these initiatives and how you can help us continue to make a difference. Together, we can ensure that our older residents thrive with dignity and independence.

-John

Veterans Directed Care Cont.

Continued from Page 1

their choosing, which may include family members or friends, fostering trust and familiarity in their care.

4. **Counseling and Support:** Trained counselors assist veterans in creating a personalized care plan, managing their budgets, and navigating the program. However, the veteran retains control over all major decisions.

5. **Adaptability:** The care plan can be adjusted as the veteran’s needs change over time, ensuring that care remains appropriate and effective.

Services Covered:

The program can cover a wide range of services and support, including:

- Assistance with activities of daily living (e.g., bathing, dressing, eating).
- Homemaking services (e.g., cleaning, meal preparation).

- Respite care for family caregivers.
- Home modifications (e.g., wheelchair ramps, grab bars).
- Medical equipment or supplies.
- Personal care services.

Eligibility Requirements:

To qualify for Veterans Directed Care:

- The veteran must be enrolled in the VA health care system.
- They must have a clinical need for long-term care services.

How to Access the Program:

To determine eligibility and learn more about enrolling in the VDC program, veterans in Maine should contact the Togus VA Medical Center or their local VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The VA Maine Healthcare System includes several CBOCs across the state, including locations in Bangor, Calais, Caribou, Lewiston, and Portland.

3 Big Medicare Prescription Drug Changes in 2025

By Rachel Nania

Big changes are coming to Medicare’s prescription drug coverage (known as Part D) in 2025 that could impact how you pay for your medications — and how much you pay.

Here’s what you need to know as we kick off the new year.

1. Out-of-pocket drug costs will be capped at \$2,000

The biggest change in 2025 is a new \$2,000 cap on annual out-of-pocket prescription drug expenses, which will help an estimated 3.2 million people in Medicare prescription drug plans save money on their covered medications this year, a recent report from AARP shows. Part D enrollees who reach the cap will save an average of \$1,500 in 2025, and some will see savings of \$3,000 or more.

Someone who takes a pricey cancer drug, for example, may hit the \$2,000 limit in the first month or two of the new year. Once they do, they won’t have to pay anything out-of-pocket for the remainder of the year.

Historically, Part D plans have not had a ceiling on out-of-pocket spending. This, combined with rising drug prices, has saddled many older Americans with expenses so great that some have skipped doses or missed refills because they can’t afford to take their medication as prescribed. Nearly half of people polled by AARP report not filling a prescription due to its cost, or knowing someone who has done so.

The new \$2,000 cap — a provision in the AARP-backed prescription drug law signed in 2022 — takes effect Jan. 1 and will be adjusted each year along with the other parts of the Part D benefit.

“AARP members from across the political spectrum overwhelmingly call lowering prescription drug costs a top concern and this new out-of-pocket spending cap will provide critical savings, allowing people to redirect money toward their families, broader health needs, or financial stability,” AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer Nancy LeaMond said in a statement. “As the voice for 100 million Americans aged 50-plus, AARP remains committed to ensuring this law is fully implemented and continues to lower drug costs for seniors for years to come.”

2. The coverage gap — or “donut hole” — will finally close

The original Medicare Part D

benefit had a coverage gap (also called the “donut hole”) where enrollees were responsible for 100 percent of their prescription drug costs. This cost-sharing amount was eventually lowered to 25 percent. Even still, many enrollees who reached the coverage gap faced higher out-of-pocket costs while they were in that part of the benefit.

In 2024, Part D enrollees entered the coverage gap after their total prescription drug spending reached \$5,030. Once they hit that amount, they were responsible for up to 25 percent of the cost of their medication until their out-of-pocket expenses reached \$8,000 and pushed them into catastrophic coverage.

The prescription drug law that created the new \$2,000 out-of-pocket spending cap also eliminates the coverage gap, simplifying coverage for enrollees. Beginning Jan. 1, a person will have the same cost-sharing from the time they meet their Part D plan deductible until they reach the new \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap, at which point, they’ll be off the hook for any additional out-of-pocket expenses for their covered prescription drugs for the remainder of the calendar year.

3. You can spread your drug costs throughout the year

In an effort to bring some relief to people on high-priced medications — especially those who might hit the new \$2,000 limit in the first few months of the year — Part D enrollees now have the option to enroll in a new payment program that spreads their out-of-pocket expenses throughout the year, instead of potentially paying them all at once.

This payment plan isn’t for everyone. For example, it doesn’t make much sense for someone with low or manageable monthly medication expenses. It’s also less beneficial to people who sign up for the plan later in the year, when there are fewer months to spread out the payments.

If you enroll in the payment program — and you can enroll any time throughout the year — you’ll receive a monthly bill for your medications from your drug plan. This bill will be separate from the monthly bill for your plan premium, if you have one.

Just know that the payment plan won’t save you money on your prescription expenses, but it will help ease the burden of paying a large lump sum up front at the pharmacy counter.

Our number: 207-664-6016

Volunteer of the Month

Judy Blood is a key volunteer for the meal delivery program at Friends in Action. Judy, her brother Bob Hessler and his wife, Sara team up to deliver 40 or more meals. They are crucial to the meal delivery program.

Judy has been involved with getting meals to people experiencing food insecurity for a long time. Before volunteering for FIA, Judy worked with St Dunstan's Episcopal Church "Everybody Eats" program. Everybody Eats was using a drive-through take-out system. Then Friends in Action offered to help by delivering these meals. Judy signed up.

FIA also collaborates with the "Welcome Table", where meals are prepared by the Congregational Church. Now, every Monday and Wednesday Judy delivers food from those churches to people's homes.

Knocking on a door to make the delivery and seeing the people she's come to know gives her a chance to share a smile and make sure things are okay. Judy truly enjoys the work.

Invest in Your Community:
Sponsor Friends in Action!

Friends in Action needs your support! Help us provide vital transportation, senior center activities, and food security programs for older adults and people with disabilities in our community. Become a sponsor and make a real difference!

We offer program-specific sponsorships at various giving levels, plus numerous sponsorship and participation opportunities in our major fundraising events. As a sponsor, you'll receive valuable benefits, including website and newsletter features, event tickets, and chances for impactful marketing and community engagement.

Strengthen your community image and boost your brand awareness while supporting a vital cause! Learn more and become a sponsor today by going to our website at friendsinactionellsworth.org, emailing us at info@friendsinactionellsworth.org, giving us a call at 207-664-6016, or stop by the office at 5 General Moore Way in Ellsworth.

Let us help you "get the house in order"
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
5:30-7:30 pm
Moore Community Center - Theater



Do you want to give your family a great gift for the new year? Join us to learn why it is so important to discuss end of life decisions now and not later.

- This interactive overview will cover:
- Estate planning
 - Funeral services
 - Home care services
 - Hospice services
 - Liquidating/downsizing

Please RSVP to schaar@northernlight.org
or call Susan at 207-712-3429
*Virtual option available



The YMCA has graciously offered to entertain and provide pizza for the kids.
*Must be potty trained

ASK Northern Light Health
Home Care & Hospice

When should I Talk to my
Family about my End of Life
Wishes/Advance Directives?

The simple answer is the sooner,
the better and while you are

well! It is a lot harder to discuss
your wishes when a looming
illness is present, and emotions
are running high. Being very
clear about what you do and do
not want will give you and your
family peace of mind and the
confidence to carry out your
wishes.

MENU

February 2025

Tuesday, February 4th Tomato Bisque, Dinner Roll, Green Beans, and Mandarin Oranges	Tuesday, February 11th Cheese Pizza, Salad and Dressing, Broccoli, and Peaches	Tuesday, February 18th Broccoli and Cheddar Soup, Mozzarella Stuffed Breadstick, Carrots, and Cinnamon Applesauce	Tuesday, February 25th Oven Fried Chicken, Mashed Potatoes, Peas, and Peaches
Thursday, February 6th Biscuit and Gravy, Eggs, Breakfast Potatoes, and Cantaloupe	Thursday, February 13th Shepards Pie, Dinner Roll, Cauliflower, and Pears	Thursday, February 20th Chicken Quesadillas, Spanish Rice, Green Beans, and Grapes	Thursday, February 27th Loaded Baked Potato, Dinner Roll, Corn, and Pears



Desserts To Be Announced Daily! Subject To Change
Please call 664-6016 before 4:30 on Monday & Wednesday to reserve lunch for Tuesday & Thursday.

