

# Local News

## AARP's medicare info line to be discontinued

WASHINGTON, DC—A pilot program that provides answers to questions about Medicare will cease operation on February 27, according to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). AARP has offered a toll-free number on a trial basis since November exclusively to residents of North Carolina and Ohio. The Prospective Payment Info Line, 1-800-527-5226, is open Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

AARP President John Denning, a resident of Clinton, North Carolina, said, "We're very pleased with the Info Line's success. We've gotten a lot of calls and we've helped a lot of people. Our next step is to take some time and evaluate the calls we got from both states, and then consider offering the number nationwide."

Denning urged people across the state to call now before the service ends. "You don't need to wait until you're facing a hospital stay to call this number," he said. "Now is the best time to call."

Since its inception, more than 2,000 North Carolinians have called the Info Line with questions about Medicare's new Prospective Payment System. The new system, which was adopted to help control rising health care costs, has resulted in some changes in patient care, including shorter hospital stays and more outpatient surgery. Often, according to Denning, older Americans don't know what these changes will mean for them.

"Older patients and their families need to know what to expect during a stay in the hospital," Denning said. "They need to know their rights as

patients. They need to know they can appeal a hospital's decision to admit or to discharge them, and the Info Line can tell them how."

The Info Line is staffed by trained paralegals who are older Americans. The operators can explain Medicare patients' rights under the new system and send more detailed consumer information to callers through the mail.

Operators cannot handle individual complaints, offer medical or legal advice, refer callers to doctors or hospitals, or answer questions about other AARP services. When possible, they will refer callers with questions they cannot answer to other services, medical bureaus, Social Security offices or insurance companies.

Anyone in the state can call the number, regardless of whether they are a Medicare beneficiary or an AARP member.

Denning said residents who need information on patients' rights after February 27 can write for AARP's free brochure, "Knowing Your Rights" at 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC, 20049.

The Info Line is part of AARP's Health Care Campaign, an ongoing, national effort to reduce health costs and maintain quality care for all Americans.

With more than 24 million members, AARP is the nation's largest and oldest organization of retired and employed Americans age 50 and over. The nonprofit, nonpartisan group provides its members representation in state and federal governments, educational and community service programs and direct membership benefits.



JOHN T. DENNING PRESIDENT, AARP

## DAR to hold conference

North Carolina Society Daughters of the American Revolution will hold its 87th State Conference March 9 to 11 at Pinehurst Hotel, Pinehurst, according to Mrs. Joseph K. Showfety, Hickory, State Regent. Several hundred members representing the 111 DAR chapters throughout the state are expected to attend. Distinguished guests will include the President General of DAR, Mrs. Raymond Fleck who will be the keynote speaker, and five State Regents as follows: Mrs. Howard F. Lee, Illinois; Mrs. Marion H. Miller, Indiana; Mrs. David S. Hawkins, Maryland; Mrs. Billie Joe Lovett, Texas; and Mrs. Frederick W. Brigrance, Tennessee, all of whom will bring greetings.

The eleven chapters in District VIII, headed by Mrs. Dewitt Gaddy, Morven, will serve as hosts for the Conference. Opening business session will convene at 2 o'clock p.m. on Monday, March 9, a memorial service will be held at 4:30 with State

Chaplain Miss Anne Catherine Bland presiding. A reception honoring National and State Officers and guests will be held at 6:30. The banquet at 7:30 will feature a film "The Portrait of a Daughter" and the State's Outstanding Junior Member will be honored.

Tuesday morning's business session will be followed by the awards luncheon at which time state winners of the DAR Good Citizen Award, the American History Month Essay Awards, the American History Scholarship Award, the Outstanding History Teacher, and Constitution Week Awards will be announced. Following dinner on Tuesday night, President General, Mrs. Raymond Fleck will speak on "We, the People" and the 82nd Airborne Band will present a concert.

Final session on Wednesday morning will be concerned with District Directors' reports, the passing of resolutions and the announcement of the new nominating committee.

## Business activity rises in state of North Carolina

The level of business activity in the southeastern United States increased 0.5 percent in December, according to the First Wachovia Southeast Business Index.

The Index tracks the pace of economic activity in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Eleven states registered gains in business activity, one experienced a decline and one was unchanged during the month.

Two of the Index components for the Southeast improved in December, while one was off from the previous month and one was unchanged.

Nonagricultural employment was up 0.4 percent, and initial claims for unemployment insurance declined 3.9 percent. Residential building permit values, which reflect plans for future construction, were down 1.6 percent. The average workweek in manufacturing was unchanged from November at 40.6 hours.

Higher nonagricultural employment was reported in 11 of the southeastern states and the District of Columbia in December. The most rapid rate of nonagricultural employment growth occurred in Maryland, Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia.

Over the past 12 months, job growth in the Southeast has led the growth of national employment. Non-agricultural employment has increased 2.4 percent in the Southeast since December 1985, while nationally it has grown 2.3 percent.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the Southeast was 6.9 percent in December, down 0.3 percentage points from the rate in November. At the national level, the unemployment rate was 6.7 percent, down 0.2 percentage points from November. Over the past 12 months, the rate for Southeast has remained unchanged, while the national rate has decreased 0.2 percentage points.

The rate of unemployment was below the national average in six of the 13 states in December. The lowest unemployment rate was reported in Florida and Maryland at 4.7 percent. Louisiana with 14.4 percent and Mississippi with 12.7 percent had the highest rates.

Data are adjusted to smooth the effects of historical seasonal factors and certain statistical aberrations. Building permit data have been deflated by the Consumer Price Index to reflect planned construction expenditures in constant 1967 dollars. Because the economic environment

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## Citizen involvement critical to estuary

(Washington, North Carolina)—Speaking before hundreds of concerned North Carolinians, First District Congressman Walter B. Jones assured them that their participation was crucial to the success of a 5-year study of the Albemarle and Pamlico estuaries.

"Yours will be a difficult and frustrating role as citizen advisors,—you will often feel as if you are on the outside of the process looking in. But you have one very important factor on your side — you have people power. If that wasn't clear before today, it is very clear now. The combination of sheer numbers and strong conviction gives you the power to influence the development and direction of this program," stated Congressman Jones.

The Congressman was speaking at a day-long conference at Beaufort County College sponsored by the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study, the NC Coastal Federation, the Pamlico-Tar River Association, the Regional Development Institute at East Carolina University, and the UNC Sea Grant College Program, in cooperation with 25 other organizations.

The Albemarle-Pamlico study was announced by Congressman Jones, Governor Martin and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on April 15, 1986. At the urging of the Congressman, EPA included the Albemarle-Pamlico systems in the agency's new National Estuaries Program.

Congressman Jones, who is Chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, added an amendment to the recently enacted Clean Water Act which designates the Albemarle-Pamlico system as an

"estuary of national significance." This new law provides a sure future for the National Estuary Program, authorizing funding and the implementation of management plans developed through the studies.

In his remarks, Congressman Jones noted that "the warning signals were heard almost too late" for the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary, and that now "federal and state governments are involved in a massive project to determine what went wrong and begin to correct the damage."

"Most experts agree that the Albemarle-Pamlico estuary is far healthier than the Chesapeake. Overall, its water quality is still fairly good. Nonetheless, many disturbing trends have been discovered, and we see in our own areas some of the problems that have devastated the Chesapeake: diseased fish; dying plant life; disappearance of the striped bass; algae blooms and depleted oxygen; fish kills; and closure of hundreds of acres of once productive shellfish beds. Undoubtedly we have some corrections to make. Mostly however, this program is about prevention," Chairman Jones stated.

Congressman Jones stressed that the function of the study is to develop recommendations to restore and maintain the estuary; to produce a "blueprint for action."

"Let me make clear what the Albemarle-Pamlico project is and what it is not. It is an effort to study the estuary, analyze its problems, publicize its needs, and suggest ways of dealing with them. It is not a regulatory program," he concluded.

## NC Fisheries Commission to meet next month

The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission conducted a business meeting February 24, at 10:00 a.m., at the Sheraton Motel in Greenville.

Commissioners decided which proposed regulation charges to take to public hearings this Spring. The meeting is part of the annual regulation cycle. Interested citizens will be notified of the proposed changes so they can prepare for the public hear-

ings in May.

This was not a meeting where the Commission seeked public comment; however, a brief period was allowed at the start of the business session for people to speak on any topic.

For further information, contact the Division of Marine Fisheries by calling toll free 1-800-682-2632 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Duke endowment receives financial award

The Duke Endowment has awarded over \$3 million in operating grants to 167 hospitals and 41 child-care institutions in North and South Carolina.

Ashley H. Gale, Jr., director of the Endowment's Hospital and Child-Care Divisions, said that the grants were approved by the Endowment's trustees at their February meeting. "Nearly \$1.6 million of the total," said Gale, "helps hospital cover costs of caring for the poor; another \$350,000 is for data-gathering services used by hospitals. Over \$1 million is also awarded to help child-care institutions meet regular operating expenses."

When James Buchanan Duke established the Duke Endowment in 1924, he directed that all qualifying nonprofit hospitals in the two Carolinas receive one dollar per day for each day of free care given to charity patients. Since the cost of operating a hospital bed was about \$4 per day in 1924, the Duke contribution underwrote a significant portion of indigent care in the Carolinas. With the advent of government-sponsored Medicare-Medicaid programs, the percentage of "free bed" days fell significantly. Since 1975, however, the totals have risen steadily until

this year.

Hospitals reporting to the Endowment indicated that percentages of "free days" rose from 19.5 percent in 1985 to 19.6 percent in 1986.

While the percentage of charity care has increased, total usage of hospitals is down. Hospitals reported nearly 1,000 fewer bed in use, as well as a decrease of 185,783 in total days of care rendered.

Additional Endowment grants to hospitals in 1986 totaled over \$13 million, while child-care institutions received over \$820,000.

The Duke Endowment provides assistance to nonprofit hospitals and child-care institutions in North and South Carolina; rural United Methodist churches and retired ministers in North Carolina; and four educational institutions: Duke, Furman, and Johnson C. Smith universities, and Davidson College.

One of the nation's largest private foundations, the 1986 market value of the Endowment's assets was nearly \$800 million. Since 1924, trustees have awarded grants totaling approximately \$787 million to the beneficiaries selected by James B. Duke. Grants appropriate during 1986 totaled over \$40 million.

## Information on USS N.C.

WILMINGTON—Commissioned in April 1941, the USS NORTH CAROLINA was considered the greatest sea weapon in the world at that time. During World War II, she earned 15 battlestars and participated in every major naval offensive in the Pacific from Guadalcanal to Okinawa. A memorial since 1962, the USS NORTH CAROLINA is now dedicated to the men and women of all US military services who defended our country during World War II.

Visitors may view a 10-minute orientation film, and then take a two hour, self-guided tour which includes the crew's quarters, galley, sick bay, engine room, pilot house, guns, Kingfisher float plane and museum. In addition, there is a Roll of Honor Room which memorializes the names of the 10,000 North Carolinians who gave their lives during World War II.

During the summer (first Friday in June through Labor Day), the USS NORTH CAROLINA's colorful history is brought to life in an outdoor Sound and Light Spectacular, "The Immortal Showboat," viewed from

ashore. Visitors sit in a 1,000-seat grandstand just across from the ship's port bow. A network of speakers provides excellent sound, and over 400 lights of varying color and intensity created the Battleship's many moods. Special effects include light 20mm and 40mm anti-aircraft gunfire, the blast and flame of large 5 and 16-inch guns, and a simulated torpedo explosion.

The USS NORTH CAROLINA Battleship Memorial is open every day of the year from 8:00 am to approximately sunset. The summer drama is presented nightly at 9:00 pm.

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The new tax law does not affect most 1986 tax returns. If you have any questions on 1986 changes, check your tax package, or order Publication 553, "Highlights of the 1986 Tax Law Changes." Call 1-800-424-FORM (3676) or the IRS Forms number in your phone book to get a copy.

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