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## Seniors Appreciate O'Neill's Help with Medications – Medicare Part D

The O'Neill Center has been a busy place over the past year. From becoming recertified as a nationally accredited senior center to offering health and fitness options and rides to medical appointments, the O'Neill Center has been a happening place. The last six weeks of the year were extra busy and nobody knows this more than Robin Collins, Licensed Social Worker at O'Neill Center. During this period known as Medicare open enrollment, Collins and her assistant help seniors understand their options before choosing a Medicare Part D plan, enroll seniors in plans and screen for eligibility for low income subsidy assistance and other benefits. The staff also helps many seniors receive free prescription medications through the Prescription Assistance for Seniors (PAS) program, enrolls folks in the *RUOK?* telephone reassurance program, and much more.

During 2010, over 3900 social service contacts were provided, helping nearly 500 seniors from across Washington County. Medicare questions, consultations, and Part D comparisons comprised a large number of these contacts. Many seniors find the Medicare Part D plans impossible to understand. Collins and her assistant Ann, make it their goal to become familiar with the many plans so seniors can make well-informed choices and receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Following her Medicare Part D consultation at O'Neill, Esther Hall had this to say: "Our counselor was very helpful and personable. She was organized and prepared for us when we arrived. Her explanations were very helpful and our enrollment was one less thing for us to worry with." These words express the sentiments of 94% of those surveyed who agree that because of this service, they experienced less stress and anxiety in choosing their Part D plan.

The PAS program was implemented by O'Neill Center in 2002 following the passage of the Washington County Senior Service levy. This service assists seniors in securing free medications through pharmaceutical patient assistance programs. According to Ann Kline, social services assistant, "Many seniors have had to choose between their medications and food before coming to the O'Neill Center for help. Even individuals with Part D plans, can find themselves in the donut hole and unable to afford needed medications." Over \$4.6M in free medications have been secured for Washington County seniors since the PAS program began.

If you or someone you know could benefit from any of these programs, contact the O'Neill Center at (740) 373-3914 or stop by the facility located at 333 Fourth Street, Marietta, Ohio. O'Neill Senior Center, Inc. is a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping seniors of Washington County be HIP: Healthy, Independent and Productive.

