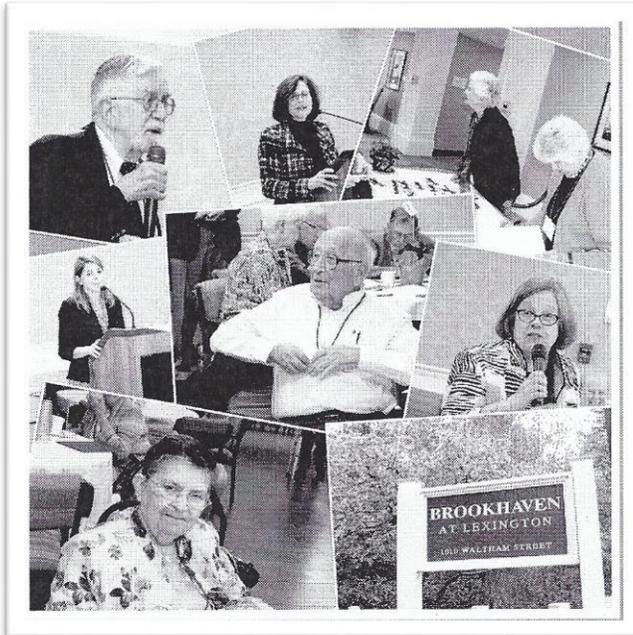


Mass. Elder Affairs Head Outlines Program Priorities at MLCRA Annual Meeting at Brookhaven

What a wonderful time we had at the MLCRA Annual Meeting at Brookhaven on May 13! Those who were lucky enough to be there can surely tell you stories; this report will give you only the flavor of the event and a brief recital of the highlights of the day.



Scenes from Annual Meeting - Marvin Ungar

It started off with a brief introduction by Will Holton, president of MLCRA, in which he outlined the successes and the challenges of the past year. Will spoke about the many Executive Board meetings that had been accomplished with the help of teleconferencing, allowing members from far-off communities to attend from their homes. This has made possible a great change in our meetings, making them less of a challenge to attend and allowing for a greater interchange of ideas. He spoke about trips to Overlook in Charlton and Sweetwood at Williamstown this year, allowing us more exposure in the western part of the state. He outlined the Area 3 and 4 meeting in March which brought together folks from the eastern parts of Massachusetts. He talked about outreach to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and to the Joint

Committee for Elder Affairs, a task made more difficult with the retirement of Ang Giambusso who had acted as our legislative liaison for quite some time. And he talked of **plans for the future-- surveys of member communities** so we can learn which issues are of most concern to you, **recruiting new board members** with the energy to take on tasks we just never seem to get to, **improving the Patriot, and the Website** so they can bring information to a broader group of people, **and investigating other means of communication.**

MLCRA Treasurer Jeanne Stolbach gave a brief explanation of our finances. We had income last year (Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting) of \$13,435, almost all of it from membership dues. Our expenses were \$7,919.76, with the cost of printing and mailing the *Patriot* being by far the largest expense. Our available assets amount to \$64,781.45. So we are in good shape, running a lean organization and are well placed to move on.



Alice Bonner

Will then introduced the other members of the Board before introducing our Keynote Speaker, Alice Bonner, Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). Secretary Bonner spoke about the mission of the Office of Elder Affairs, which is primarily to assure the independence and empowerment of older folks within the limits of their abilities. EOEA is currently working on three main issues:

Aging in community - helping those who wish to do so to remain in their own homes and have necessary services come to them;
Scams that take advantage of the elderly, such as those involving

calls about a loved one being stuck in some remote place and needing funds to get home, or those offering a large financial reward for allowing someone to clear checks through the older person's account; **developing "care forces,"** a combination of family and paid caregivers for frail elders so that no one is overly stressed by the caregiving experience to the level that they feel they cannot go

on. This includes developing respite strategies and assuring the usual caregiver that using respite from time to time is a positive experience for everyone.

Secretary Bonner talked about the difficulty in getting clear and up-to-date information about elder services, including eligibility requirements when appropriate. She said that the EOEA would work to make information more widely available so that families can search more easily for appropriate services and compare those that are offered without having to visit many potential programs. She talked about getting information for either the elderly or disabled from MASS OPTIONS, a statewide information and referral service (www.massoptions.org or 844-422-6277). She discussed the agency's promotion of healthy living for seniors including diet, exercise, rest, and medical care. She talked about working with local communities so that they are able to support folks as they age, so that people don't have to go to a nursing home when they are still reasonably healthy but having trouble with some of the logistics of everyday life, such as grocery shopping, preparing meals, minor property upkeep, getting out to socialize, and all the minutia of daily life. She is hopeful that the agency will be able to help move some older individuals from nursing homes to less restrictive environments that will provide for them adequately, but will not be as medically focused as nursing homes are. She spoke of assisted living as a nonmedical model that might be appropriate for some people currently in nursing homes.

After Secretary Bonner finished her speech, MLCRA held its election of officers. Will Holton was reelected as president, Jeanne Stolbach as treasurer, and Meg Kerber as corresponding secretary. The other Board Members-at-Large elected were Frank Blatt from Springhouse, George Erickson from Brooksby Village, and Kathy Berg from Overlook.

After lunch, **Elissa Sherman from LeadingAge**, the organization for management of nonprofit facilities for the elderly, spoke briefly about ways we could work together-on helping everyone understand their rights and responsibilities as residents in a continuing care retirement community (CCRC), on potential legislation, on finding ways to help new potential residents understand what they are getting into. Elissa spoke for about 15 minutes and then asked if

there were any questions-and the floodgates opened! Although she had been scheduled for only 20 minutes, Elissa held the floor for about a hour and a half! The questions ranged far and wide, from

the implications of "observation" status when hospitalized, to ways of judging quality when comparing and contrasting CCRCs, to the kinds of relationships that should develop between residents

and their Board. Not only did Elissa answer every question fully (she looks young but she had many years of experience in this field) but she did it with verve and vigor! Assisted at times by Jim Freehling, CEO of Brookhaven, she blew us away with her knowledge and her ability to understand the position of residents.

Again and again, **she emphasized knowing and understanding your contract.** The contract in most places is pretty comprehensive and no two CCRCs have exactly the same contract. Most questions

that are internal to your CCRC are covered in the contract, such as when initial deposits will be returned after a resident has left the facility, or how it is handled when moving to another apartment or another part of the facility, such as memory care. She often referred to "best practices" but made clear that member organizations were encouraged, but certainly not required, to comply with "best practices." She spoke knowledgeably about the governance of CCRCs and the challenge to a resident chosen to serve on the Board. **Elissa spoke also about the advantages for a Board to have a**



Jeanne Stolbach



Alissa Sherman

resident available to speak for his or her compatriots, because information passed along through management channels may be incomplete.

It was an exciting and informative interchange, and made clear which issues MLCRA needs to work on during the coming year:

- Observation status for Medicare hospital admissions and the meaning of "reasonable time" for observation status;
- Ways of judging quality in a CCRC generally, and quality in specific aspects of CCRC life;
- Relationship between the Board and residents as it applies to the many different kinds of organizational structures of the CCRCs that are members of MLCRA.

It was an interesting and exciting day that gave us a clear understanding of the direction our members would like the leadership to pursue. What a *treat!* -*Sheila McMahon*



MLCRA Members at Annual Meeting: (l-r) Meg Kerber, Brooksby Village; Edward Epp, North Hill; David Bayer, Briarwood; Karen Chertoff, NewBridge; Anita Barker, Newbury Court; and Shirley Pisarski, Overlook.