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Your Update from AgeOptions

December 2016

AgeOptions Joins National Campaign To End Senior Hunger

John,

Thank you so much from the bottom of my soul. My refrigerator is empty with only a bottle of water, ketchup, relish, mustard, and I used the last of the jelly and eggs today. This is the greatest gift that you have given me. I hope that one day I can pay it forward and help someone else. I am forever grateful.

Janet (we have changed her name)

AgeOptions volunteer John Nally helped the writer of the above email successfully apply for an increase in her SNAP benefits. She received an increase in the monthly benefit, plus the difference for the previous three months.

In suburban Cook County, more than 83,000 older adults qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, but only an estimated 50 percent are enrolled. This means that more than 40,000 older adults in our area are missing out on SNAP benefits that will give them resources to buy food and stay healthy.

They are among millions of older Americans who face a double whammy: a fixed income and rising food costs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that just two of every five older adults who are eligible for SNAP are enrolled in the program. This means that millions of low-income older adults are missing out on this vital program, which provides an average monthly benefit of \$110 to help participants buy healthy food.

AgeOptions.

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AgeOptions was recently awarded a continuation grant to support the National Council on Aging (NCOA) nationwide effort to help older adults who are struggling to buy groceries by applying for SNAP to supplement their food budget.

“Last year AgeOptions helped 1,471 people enroll in SNAP, with an average yearly savings of \$1,584 each,” said Elizabeth Steimel, AgeOptions community engagement and benefits access specialist. “We want people to know that if their gross income is less than \$1,980 a month for an individual, or \$2,670 for a couple, they may qualify for SNAP. And those with higher incomes may still qualify if they have high medical and living expenses.”

With this grant, AgeOptions joins more than 30 community organizations across the nation that are stepping up their efforts to assist older adults in applying for SNAP. The organizations will use NCOA’s free online [BenefitsCheckUp®](#) tool to screen older adults with limited income for SNAP eligibility. Since 2014, the initiative has screened almost 400,000 people for SNAP eligibility and helped nearly 70,000 seniors apply for SNAP.

“We’re excited to be part of this proven effort that has the potential to help low-income older adults in suburban Cook County improve their health and financial security,” Steimel said.

“AgeOptions has a strong history of helping older adults, and we are confident that increasing SNAP enrollment with BenefitsCheckUp® and other proven outreach methods will have a profound effect on the lives of people in our communities.”

AgeOptions conducts outreach and enrollment assistance throughout suburban Cook County to increase the number of eligible seniors enrolled in SNAP so they can increase their monthly food budget. To find out more about SNAP eligibility, contact Elizabeth Steimel at AgeOptions: elizabeth.steimel@ageoptions.org or (708) 383-0258.

For more information on NCOA’s senior hunger initiative, visit ncoa.org/SeniorHunger.