



# MAK-AIRS Midwest I&R News

## 2010 MAK-AIRS Training and Annual Membership Meeting

The Annual Meeting of MAK-AIRS brought persons from Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas, representing 15 different Information and Referral/Assistance programs to Kansas City, September 16-17, 2010.

The training part of the meeting was kicked off with a Webinar presented by Clive Jones, Consultant from AIRS. He provided an overview of products and services, provided by AIRS to its members. Products highlighted included, Certification for I&R/I&A Specialists; Accreditation for Information and Referral programs; the I&R Toolkit to assist local agencies in developing their programs; the ABC's of I&R, a must have training tool for all I&R practitioners; the Annual Training Conference, and of course the importance of the regional affiliates which includes MAK-AIRS.

Heather Pierce, MAK-AIRS President, and representing Kansas 2-1-1, presented "Dealing with Difficult People." We looked at callers termed difficult, discussed why we term them as such, and looked at methods that can be used to mitigate their impact. The workshop helped us to understand how to interact

with such callers in a professional and helpful manner.

Scott Jones, Manager of United Way 2-1-1, Kansas City, introduced Candice Leimkuhler, Intake and Assessment Supervisor from Tri-County Mental Health Services for a presentation on "Helping Callers with Mental Health Symptoms." This workshop discussed how to identify callers that are experiencing mental health symptoms or a crisis. The information was shared with the understanding that most I&R/I&A Specialists are not trained in mental health crisis intervention. However, it is important that the Specialist recognize symptoms and know how to best refer or find help for the caller.

One of the more unique presentations was "Laughter Yoga," presented by the Care Connection for Aging Services team. Vickie Whitsitt and Carol Johnson from Warrensburg, MO gave a presentation focused on the therapeutic benefits of exercising laughter. Aging requires people to make critical attitudinal choices. It can be approached ei-

ther with a sense of loss, sadness, depression or with anticipation, a positive outlook on life and a sense of well-being. Their overview of laughter therapy/yoga groups included an emphasis on the World Laughter Tour.

Martha Love, United Way 2-1-1 and the Springfield-Green County Library, presented "Road Maps to Resources: Creating Effective Community Directories." She had previously presented this workshop at the 2010 AIRS Conference in Rochester, New York. Although I&R referrals are often given by phone, some agency staff and case managers find printed directories and quick resource guides to be helpful tools. Martha led a discussion of the pros and cons of printed resource information, identifying target audiences, producing, printing and indexing guides, and shared various formats from a variety of information and referral programs.

Margi Valleroy from the Mid-East Area Agency on Aging served as facilitator for "Sharing of Ideas/Networking." This was a highlight of the training ses-

### Winter 2010/2011

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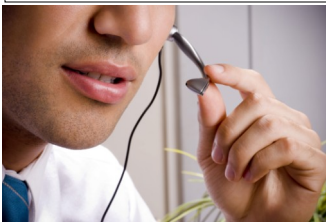
*Patt Harvey, CIRS  
Kansas City, Mo*

## 2010 MAK-AIRS Training and Annual Membership Meeting *continued*

highlight of the training session with its informal yet informative 60 minutes of learning from one another. Each participant shared a resource or program unique to its area and needs. Attendees easily saw that regardless of the population served or location, Information and Referral is a diverse yet inclusive universe.

An optional night out networking session was offered at Buca di Beppo in the Country Club Plaza. Italian cuisine, served family style, and laughter highlighted the evening. Margi Valleroy's "birthday" was even celebrated several months ahead of time! A good time was had by all.

Planning will begin in January for the 2011 Annual Meeting and Training opportunity. We hope interest and attendance will continue to grow. If you have a suggestion on location, workshops or presenters, please contact an officer or board member of MAK-AIRS.



## Information Resources

If you know a woman currently undergoing chemotherapy, there is a cleaning service that provides FREE house-cleaning. To apply, fill out the online request form for services under the "cancer patient" link <http://www.cleaningforareason.org>. 50 applications are accepted Monday through Friday at 12 noon Central Time.

The patient's doctor will need to fax a note confirming the treatment. **Cleaning for a Reason** will have a participating maid service in her zip code area arrange for the service. This organization serves the entire USA. Qualified patients are matched with professional cleaning companies who have pledged to provide four (4) free housecleaning visits to each woman in the program as long as they are undergoing treatment for cancer. Partner locations are located under the "locations" link on the website.

The United States Government **Consumer Action Handbook** is now available. This everyday guide contains helpful tips about preventing identity theft, understanding credit, filing a consumer complaint and much more. In the 2010 edition, you'll find updated information about filing for bankruptcy, finding a lawyer and planning a funeral, along with many other useful topics. Free copies may be ordered by accessing [www.consumeraction.gov/caw\\_orderhandbook.shtml](http://www.consumeraction.gov/caw_orderhandbook.shtml)

Individuals can call into the **US Uninsured Help Line** (650) 762-1928 with questions about their health coverage options and the trained health coverage counselors will walk them through their options and provide the contact information for the available programs. Individuals can also go online and take the Health Coverage Eligibility Quiz and learn which public and private health coverage programs they are eligible for. They will receive a personalized list of options, complete with program coverage, eligibility and contact information, premiums, a checklist of documents needed to apply and, for some programs, the application. You may also access the website at <http://www.coverageforall.org/>.



## “PEOPLE IN THE SPOTLIGHT”

Melissa “Mitz” Steele is starting her 13<sup>th</sup> year with the Northwest Missouri Area Agency on Aging in Albany, Missouri, and she draws upon a plethora of knowledge and resources to help the senior and disabled population and caregivers in the 18 counties of Northwest Missouri.

There is no such thing as a ‘normal’ day in her office, because she fields questions about everything from housing availability, helping locate volunteers to make minor home modifications to enable clients to more easily access their homes, utility help questions, Medicare Part D lookups and troubleshooting Part D plus Supplements and other insurance coverage, helping people get assistance in paying for their prescriptions, discerning how to complete various forms and questionnaires that clients bring to her, and the list goes on and on. Some days she feels like the plumber, carpenter, “TV guy” and sympathetic ear, all intermingled with her regular duties.

The Agency is currently working on an ADRC pilot project, and Mitz does counseling in that capacity. In addition, she participates in the Agency Health initiatives, including train the trainer and direct instruction and interaction with participants. Mitz has been an I&A specialist while she served as the Transportation Manager; and she was the Ombudsman manager before that. Her responsibilities currently focus on I & A (I & R) counseling and related areas. She has received her AIRS certification and has received many hours of CLAIM and Medicare training.

Mitz loves her job because she is able to help people, and she states that there is no greater satisfaction when the day is over than knowing that she has helped someone in crisis or in need and has helped make their life easier. The look on the face of clients when they come into her office changes from anxious and worried to smiling and relieved when they leave. Co-workers say that Mitz has a caring, reassuring and calming demeanor, which is a tremendous asset in the field of I & R.



**Melissa Steele**

*Certified Information & Referral Specialist—Aging  
NW Missouri Area Agency on Aging  
Albany, Mo*



AIRS is seeking presenters for the 2011 Annual Meeting and Training Conference, to be held June 5<sup>th</sup> to June 8<sup>th</sup> in Detroit/Dearborn, Michigan. The deadline for proposal submissions is March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. All proposals received before March 1 will be entered into a drawing for one of five free Conference Registrations. To submit a proposal go to the AIRS website [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org), go to AIRS Conference 2011 and click on Call for Proposals 2011.

## MEET OUR MEMBERS...

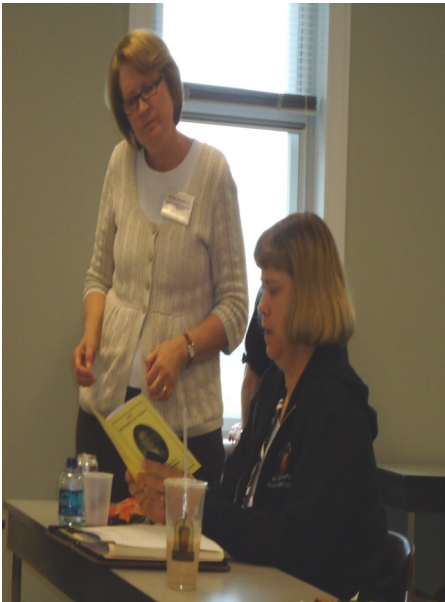
Meet **Beth Combes, Pepper Daniel** and **Tania Harrington**, the Information and Referral team at the **Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc.** (RCIL), which has ten offices located throughout Eastern Kansas with its home office in Osage City. Founded in September 1984, RCIL is committed to working with individuals, families and communities to promote independent living and individual choice to persons with disabilities, and the I&R team provides services to all individuals, regardless of age or whether the individual has a disability.

Beth, Pepper and Tania have more than 25 years combined experience providing independent living services. Each year, the I&R team, as well as the rest of RCIL staff, provide information and referral services to more than 1,800 individuals. These services range from providing phone numbers and printed materials to providing information about RCIL services and eligibility. In an effort to provide high quality service, the I&R team also provides information about outside agencies' services and refers individuals to other agencies that will best meet their needs.

While the majority of services hinge on independent living, the team also handles a variety of other issues. Recently, an individual called in need of pet food for his three dogs. The man didn't want to lose his animals, but he was concerned about their well-being. Through the dedication of the I&R team to provide helpful information, the man was able to secure food and was no longer worried about losing his beloved pets. The team is able to provide a variety of services because of its expansive resource libraries and knowledgeable RCIL staff. In an effort to continue providing valuable information, the I&R team will be evaluating its resource directory in the next year to ensure they are providing up-to-date information. This goal is just one example of the many ways the RCIL I&R team provides relevant information to meet the needs of the community.



# 2010 MAK-AIRS Annual Meeting Photos



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**MAK**  
MISSOURI ARKANSAS KANSAS



## About MAK-AIRS

MAK-AIRS is the regional affiliate for the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) for Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas. We are here to serve you! Our job is to further the goals of information and referral services through providing opportunities for networking, education, training, certification testing and community awareness.

Formerly known as the Midwest Information and Referral Services Association (MIRSA), MAK-AIRS works closely with AIRS to support you in the important work you do.

**We're on the web**  
[www.mak-airs.org](http://www.mak-airs.org)

