

Blue Ridge Community College

Times-News Column

Lee Anna Haney, Director of Public Relations

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Blue Ridge Community College is hosting a free conference for area residents interested in learning tips from experts on how to enjoy or prepare for a happy, healthy retirement in Western North Carolina. The 2011 Smart and Healthy Retirement Conference will take place on Thursday, February 17 at Blue Ridge Community College Henderson County Campus. The conference will be held from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is no charge to attend, due to sponsor support. The Conference will be held on February 22 in case of inclement weather on February 17.

Registration will be from 8:15 to 8:45 a.m. The morning session will open at 8:45 a.m. with welcome and opening comments on the foundation for a happy and healthy retirement by Luellen Kirchner, Executive Director of Key Associates. Beginning at 9 a.m., Caroline Knox, elder law attorney with the VanWinkle Law Firm, will present "Elder Law Update - Top Legal Issues Every Senior Should Know." Elder law provides seniors and people with special needs guidance on public benefits, probate and estate planning, guardianship/conservatorship, and health and long-term care planning, among other important issues.

At 10 a.m., Melanie Johnson, CPA and CVA, with Dixon Hughes will present "How the 2011 Tax Laws May Affect You and What it Means to Your Take-Home Pay, Investments, and More." According to Fidelity.com, the good news for 2011 is the new law will give taxpayers a bit of clarity and an opportunity to plan with relative confidence knowing that the playing field won't change dramatically, at least for two years. Starting at 11 a.m., Dr. Joanne Helppie MD, specializing in geriatric medicine, will present "Successful Aging and a Medical Health Update." Miriam Nelson, associate professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science, told USA TODAY, "All the research shows that what you do now is far more important than what you did when you were younger. We work with people well into their 80s and 90s. The body's capacity to get stronger and to be healthier and happier is still there." Dr. Helppie will also share information on medical issues covering at home/care giver problems and the important factors to consider when elders can no longer stay in their home and receive adequate care.

Prior to lunch at 11:45 a.m., Caron McKay, Director of Services for the Council on Aging of Henderson County, will connect participants with local senior support resources for people planning for retirement in the future or those are retired. Lunch time is provided from 12 to 1 p.m. Participants will eat on their own, with conference staff providing a list of local eateries where individuals can dine.

The afternoon session will begin at 1 p.m. with a choice of three workshops: 1) Aging in Place: Today's Options for Staying at Home Longer; 2) We Want to Move: What You Need to Know about Today's Real Estate Market; or 3) Staying Healthy, Active and Connected.

The last three workshops of the afternoon will begin at 2 p.m. with 1) Modifying a Residence for a Senior; 2) Best Travel Tips for 2011; or 3) Expanding Your Social Network.

The conference will end with closing comments from 2:45 to 3 p.m. Breaks will be provided between each session during the days for an opportunity to talk with over 30 local experts and providers of health, lifestyle and retirement services. The sponsors for this event include Blue Ridge Community College Small Business Center, Blue Ridge Community College Community Enrichment Program, Blue Ridge Center for Lifelong Learning, and Key Associates.

To register online for the conference go to http://www.blueridge.edu/business_person/events/retire.php or contact the Small Business Center at (828) 694-1779 at Blue Ridge Community College.