

Help available for medical care

By Patrick L. Sullivan

SALISBURY — Many people who are eligible for Medicaid programs don't know it, according to Janet Carlson and Patricia Frasca.

The two spoke at Noble Horizons on Saturday, April 25.

Carlson is the executive director of PharmaCares, a nonprofit organization (based in Cornwall) that helps people get access to health-care services. Frasca is a navigator coordinator for New Opportunities, a community action agency that serves Waterbury, Meriden, Torrington and

27 other Connecticut towns.

Carlson explained that while Medicare is an entitlement program, Medicaid is a benefit — and an immense public health insurance program with 70 million participants.

In Connecticut, Medicaid takes the form of the HUSKY program: HUSKY A is for pregnant women and families with children under 19; B is for parents with children under 19 with certain income levels; C is for the elderly, the disabled and the blind; D serves people between the ages

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of 18 to 64.

John Neufeld, in the audience, noted that neither Medicare nor the secondary insurance many people carry covers dental work.

Carlson said Medicaid has a dental option, and suggested calling around to find a dentist that accepts Medicaid.

Medicaid is means-tested — the amount of and level of assistance depends on a person's income and assets.

Carlson and Frasca went through a complicated explanation of how the calculations are made — including maximum monthly income levels, assets, transferring assets and people who have a disability but can still work to some extent.

Neufeld, a writer, said he was attending in part because a character he is writing about is "facing decisions."

"People are afraid of Medicaid," he said. "It reminds them of the poor farm. They lose their house, go to a county facility and are left to die."

"I'm assuming that is not true," he added.

"That's not true at all," replied Carlson.

"Our objective is to save you money, because that is good for your health," added Frasca.

Carlson said she had a case a few months ago in which a

man who was living in a tent came to her office for help. He hadn't eaten in several days, was suffering from a back injury and Lyme disease and was, overall, in pretty bad shape.

She said the first thing she did was get the man something to eat along with his application for assistance.

She said she saw the man recently — he was healthy, had found a job and was no longer living rough.

Frasca said there are many services available under the general heading of Medicaid, but many people are unaware of them.

"Get someone like us to help you," Frasca said. "We'll be done in a half hour."

"Fifteen minutes, baby," said Janet. "We like to compete."

For more information, go to www.newoppinc.org or see PharmaCares Facebook page.