



Shirley Wheatley Earns State Honor for Volunteer Work

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ALTON, IL – For many, retirement is the end of sentence, paragraph and story. For others like Shirley Wheatley, it's more like only a comma.

Wheatley, who retired several years ago after long careers with the Illinois Department of Mental Health, Lewis and Clark Community College and Sangamon State University, has volunteered for five years with the State Health Insurance Program (SHIP). In 2012, Wheatley was named SHIP's Volunteer of the Year for the Southern Region of Illinois.

“Volunteering is a wonderful way to stay active,” said Wheatley, who works two days a week out of the SHIP office at Alton Memorial Hospital. “All of the information about insurance and Medicare can be quite overwhelming for seniors. It's very satisfying to help people get their questions answered.”

OASIS, in partnership with Alton Memorial Hospital and SHIP, work together to provide trained and certified volunteers for Medicare community counseling. Wheatley said that being a health insurance volunteer helps others who are feeling confused, while also allowing her to meet new people, experience professional growth, become a more informed consumer, and help people save money while getting the best health care possible.

“The nice thing about this is that four people who worked out of the Alton Memorial Hospital office have won this award,” Wheatley said. The others are De Harris, Mary Cory and Jeanette Massey. “So I'm in some great company here. It's a very intensive training and there is also a lot of work involved with keeping up to date with all that changes in Medicare. We participate in update sessions, conferences and webinars to remain informed.

“The main thing is helping people gain an understanding of how Medicare works related to other insurance coverage. And the most demanding time for us is the open enrollment period for Medicare in the fall.”

SHIP has been active since 1998 and is a free service. It does not sell insurance or promote specific insurance companies. The goal is to help people enroll into Medicare, understand their benefits, and find supplemental or prescription drug plans that fit their unique needs. The OASIS-SHIP office located at Alton Memorial Hospital offers confidential and unbiased counseling. To schedule an appointment to speak with one of its certified counselors, call 800-392-0936.

The OASIS Institute is a national nonprofit organization that promotes successful aging through lifelong learning, health programs and volunteer engagement. Founded in 1982, OASIS has a national membership of more than 360,000 adults and serves 59,000 people annually through partnerships in 43 cities. The OASIS Institute in St. Louis is the national headquarters. For more information, visit www.oasisnet.org.



Shirley Wheatley with the trophy she received as the SHIP Volunteer of the Year for the Southern Region of Illinois.