

# **North Carolina**

## **Senior Tar Heel Legislature**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By: John Thompson

RALEIGH—The Senior Tar Heel Legislature (STHL) met on October 8 and 9 to elect new Executive Officers, review existing priorities and host several informative speakers as the year concludes. One surprise and most notable event was the awarding of the George Maddox award to Speaker Chuck Youse from Northampton County. Suzanne Merrill, Director of the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), presented the award. The award was in recognition of the work Youse does in Northampton County for seniors in need of wheelchair ramps to their residence.

Material for ramp construction is purchased with Home and Community Care Block grants in Northampton and Halifax counties, donations from private citizens and local companies as well as material directly contributed by local stores. The labor to build these ramps is provided by volunteers within the community. Youse was responsible for establishing this program, soliciting funding sources, and recruiting volunteers.

Speaker Youse was emotionally moved by the unexpected presentation of this prestigious award: “I am so humbled by this recognition, but I must emphasize, it is a community effort that makes building of ramps for our seniors possible. I am honored by this recognition and consider it not only an award to me, but also one that is recognition of all our volunteers and their dedicated efforts, contributor’s and local stores that make helping our seniors possible.”

The George Maddox award is presented each year to individuals, organizations, or communities that have excelled in meeting the needs of the older citizens in the state. George L. Maddox was an internationally known sociologist on the Duke faculty who helped shape the study of aging and human development.

Director Merrill, gave a brief presentation on legislative highlights and other activities in North Carolina. She placed emphasis on the restoration of the \$969,549 reduction taken in fiscal year 14-15 Home and Community Care Block Grant. The current budget now allows for restoration of funding for each year of the fiscal year 15-17, however, this will be non-recurring funding. The STHL, through modification of their 2016 Legislative Priorities, will be requesting the NC General Assembly to increase the Home and Community Care Block Grant funding by \$7 million in recurring funds.

Other guest speakers included Lauren Benbow from the NC Department of the Secretary of State, Securities Division, who talked about the “Advance Health Care Directive Registry.” Additional information on this subject is available at: <http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/ahcdr/>.

The final speaker of the two-day meeting was Suzanne Black from the North Carolina AARP. Her subject, "Living Longer, Living Smarter" was presented with humor and anecdotal reflections from her past.

The final two events of our meeting involved the election of new Executive Officers and the annual food drive. Executive Officers are elected by majority vote every two-years. The new STHL Speaker for 2016-2017, is Dr. Althea Taylor-Jones from Forsyth County. Speaker Jones addressed the organization after being sworn in and made a commitment to keeping advocacy and meeting with our elected officials as her top priority. More detail about Speaker Jones and the other elected Executive Officers can be found at our website, listed below.

The annual October meeting is also a time when the STHL bring in nonperishable food goods for donation to food banks throughout North Carolina. This is the fifth year of the food drive and each succeeding year brings more donations that are much welcomed throughout North Carolina. This year's donations of 368 pounds, far exceeded the 150-pounds donated last year and were donated to the Albemarle Food Bank, which serves 16-counties in North Carolina.

The STHL 2016 legislative priorities were reviewed and revised, they are: 1) Preserve or Restore Optional Medicaid Services; 2) Sustain and Expand Project C.A.R.E; 3) Strengthen and fund North Carolina's Adult Protective Services Program; 4) Uniform Adult Guardianship; 5) Home and Community Care Block Grant Funding. A more detailed explanation of these priorities will be available on the STHL website.

The STHL promotes citizen involvement and advocacy concerning aging issues before the General Assembly and assesses the legislative needs of older adults by convening a forum modeled after the North Carolina General Assembly. Please feel free to contact your local delegate or your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). You can also visit the STHL website: [www.ncsthl.org](http://www.ncsthl.org) as well as our [Facebook](#) page. The next STHL meeting will be March 17-18 2016, in Chapel Hill, NC.