Food insecurity for older people can involve complex issues that are particular to aging. A person living on a fixed income in a rented apartment might sacrifice a meal to pay for prescription medication for a chronic illness. Another might have an adequate income, but has a medical issue that makes negotiating public transportation difficult or a disability that makes food preparation impossible. Safe and appropriate food, an important part of the definition of food security, isn’t always easy for people to access as they age. Other examples of these issues include a senior with memory loss who finds it difficult to throw food away, even when it is obviously spoiled, or a person with hypertension and diabetes who finds that all he has the energy to do is to open cans of high sodium and low protein foods for the microwave.

A study published in August 2011 by the AARP Foundation examined food insecurity of older Americans. According to this and numerous other studies, older people who do not have access to appropriate food eat less calories and receive far fewer nutrients, a health risk for anyone, but in particular for people who might be dealing with a chronic medical condition or recovering from a major illness or surgery. Inadequate calorie intake can lead to dizziness which can lead to falls; inadequate protein, vitamins and nutrients can lead to a whole host of medical issues such as depression, diabetes or pain from arthritic conditions. The AARP study concludes that food insecurity for people who are older is akin to adding an additional 21 years to their age. As our community grapples with the spiraling costs of healthcare, keeping people out of hospitals and unnecessary nursing home placement through access to adequate, appropriate and safe food is a worthy human and financial goal.

Another sobering finding about older people and food insecurity comes from the organization Feeding America. In 2009, eight percent of seniors living alone in the US (884,000 households) were food insecure, a finding that Iona’s Deb Rubenstein, LICSW, Director of Consultation, Care Management and Counseling knows all too well.

“Last year, of the 250 people we served with intensive, one-on-one case management in the community, we saw firsthand how food insecurity can affect not only their nutrition, but their overall health and well-being. It’s a poignant reminder of how important it is to ensure that older people have access to safe and appropriate food, so they can live their lives to the fullest.”

Growing Older and Remaining Food Secure
Solutions that Everyone Should Know About

People gather at Iona’s Active Wellness at St. Alban’s to give and receive support.

continued on page 3
The Meet the Artists Reception in October was a joyful gathering to celebrate good art, fine wine and community. Many thanks to the staff of Washington Home and Hospice for providing the delicious food for the evening. Mark your calendars for the next gathering on Friday, February 10, 2012.

Jeffrey Z. Slavin is just one of the many younger people involved in Iona’s growth and success in helping people age well and live well. Jeffrey learned about Iona through his work as legislative assistant to the Honorable Polly Shackleton of the DC City Council, one of the early advocates for Iona and a proponent of safety net services for older people in the city. Since 1983, he has served on Iona’s Board of Directors, the Building Campaign committee and numerous benefit committees and was a recipient of the Iona President’s Award in 2004. Since he gave his first gift to Iona, he has given generously and consistently of his time, talent and financial support in many different ways. Jeffrey invited Mark Shriver to the Art of Caring Luncheon this past May to accept the LoveCareHope Award to the Shriver family, providing those gathered with a funny and touching look at a family’s love for each other and their parents. He put up a challenge gift of $2,500 this summer to help increase giving. His gift motivated an additional $7,500 of online giving to Iona during the doldrums of August, a time when the annual fund donations traditionally drop.

This November offers a unique opportunity for many more people to get involved, advocate for and multiply their gifts to Iona just like Jeffrey Slavin and many other Iona friends do every day. Give to the Max Day is a one-day fundraising event on November 9, 2011 that will unite local Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC communities to support nonprofits serving the area. Through a partnership of the National Capital Area Community Foundation and United Way and Razoo.com, a venture-funded social enterprise committed to creating a more generous world through social fundraising, and thousands of local non-profits, Give to the Max DC will get thousands of local residents to support their favorite regional charity, with the goal of raising millions in donations and grants in just 24 hours.

Razoo.com offers an easy-to-use fundraising platform for individuals and organizations, helping fundraisers to connect their friends and family with the joy of giving. Iona’s giving page on the Give to the Max site is https://give2themax.razoo.com/story/Iona. We welcome your participation as a donor, captain of a fundraising team or advocate in this special event that will improve the lives of so many in the metropolitan area. And if you are reading this after November 9th, please remember that you can give to Iona on-line any day of the year at www.iona.org.
171 of them lived alone,” she explains. “Most of them are making an income that places them at or below the federal poverty level. It isn’t all that unusual for a social worker to meet with a senior who, after the rent and the bills are paid, only has about $90 or $100 left to buy food for the month.”

For those who were able to get by on fixed incomes before the recession began, higher food and medical costs bring new emotional and logistical challenges in reaching out for assistance to find and apply for benefits that can help bridge the income gap.

“Many of the people we assist are fiercely independent. They built this community — they worked for the Federal government, served on non-profit Boards and ran the neighborhood watch groups. The last thing they thought they would have to do is to ask for help getting good food to prepare or a hot and well balanced meal to eat,” says Sally White, Executive Director of Iona. “But all of these programs and services we offer at Iona are here for everyone — it is the way this community of elders who built Iona envisioned our mission. Iona is here to help in so many ways — all of them customized to a person’s needs and completely confidential.”

Iona’s new program manager at St. Alban’s, is offering educational and informational programs to help people who are unfamiliar with assistance programs understand how they work, partnering with organizations such as the Health Insurance Counseling Project (HICP) George Washington University Community Legal Clinics and the Howard University School of Law Investor Justice and Education Clinic. “Even if they don’t need the help now personally, I find that our regular participants are real advocates in their communities and are coming to learn these things so that they can help someone else,” says Thelma.

Rose Clifford, Iona’s staff nutritionist, conducts regular sessions with topics ranging from easy ways to prepare nutritious food to what kinds of foods are beneficial for people who are dealing with chronic illnesses like diabetes or arthritis. Social Work intern Kathy Blalog serves two days at the site to speak with participants about other issues that they might want to address in a confidential setting. The emphasis, as it always has been at this program, is empowering people to retain their health and wellness.

Home delivered meals have been an integral part of Iona’s service to the community since 1990, a program that ensures that people who are homebound have adequate nutrition as they recover from an illness or when a disability prevents them from cooking. This past summer, the food vendor that the DC Office on Aging employed to produce the 1,650 meals a week for this program in DC went bankrupt. Within one weekend, Iona volunteers sprung into action and packaged 400 emergency food kits to tide homebound seniors through a rocky time, showing just how important this type of food security program is to the community. Just recently, hundreds of Iona’s friends and neighbors advocated for the DC government to replace an important commodity food program for older people which had lost funding.

Thanks to the support of friends and neighbors, Iona has provided access to adequate, appropriate and safe food for older people so that they can age well and live well. A lunch site where people congregate for education, company and a good meal; a hot meal delivered by a neighbor on a Saturday morning; a compassionate care manager to find and secure benefits to ease a financial burden — these are proven solutions to alleviate food insecurity for older people that Iona has employed since our founding in 1975.

Iona receives only 46% of the budget necessary to run our meal programs through the DC Office on Aging. We rely on philanthropy to get food to people who are isolated and homebound. Your donations make a difference. Thank you.
Collaboration and partnership have been at the heart of Iona’s work since it was founded by four faith communities more than 35 years ago. Partnership and support to the growing number of aging-in-community organizations known as “Villages” in and around Washington, D.C. represent one of Iona’s most recent collaborative efforts to help people in the city age well and live well.

Inspired by Boston’s Beacon Hill Village, a model that was created in 2001, the “Village” is a grassroots movement that helps older adults remain in, and stay connected to, their communities. Villages coordinate and deliver services to members utilizing an intergenerational neighborhood volunteer corps. Most of the services offered to residents are important to seniors who wish to remain in their own homes and communities.

Over the past four years, Iona has provided technical support and volunteer training to Village leaders in conjunction with LeadingAge, HouseWorks and the Washington Area Villages. Most recently, Iona offered an educational program on caregiving at Glover Park Village and was part of a panel discussion on difficult family conversations and elder law mediation in partnership with Northwest Neighbors Village.

As the Village movement has taken hold of the area, staff at Iona are increasingly aware of our role in supporting Villages when the needs of their members require assistance beyond what their volunteers can provide. At a meeting of a number of Village executive directors held at Iona in August, 2011, Iona posed the concept of piloting a “hot line” to a designated Iona social worker on staff who could provide consultation in these situations. This model will allow the Village executive directors immediate access to a social worker on Iona’s staff who will develop a greater understanding each Villages’ needs, and who will offer expert guidance and referrals to those involved in challenging situations.

Lisa Rindner Answers the Village “Hotline”

By her fourth year teaching Lisa realized that she was more passionate about helping families navigate difficult situations than she was about teaching second grade. She went back to the Catholic University of America for her Master of Social Work and had a second year placement at Iona, where she developed a love for supporting older people through some of the most profound challenges of aging. After she graduated, she worked for a brief time at the Northwest Nursing Home on Wisconsin Avenue before coming to Iona as a staff member in 2003.

In addition to serving as the dedicated social worker to the executive directors of the villages, Lisa provides consultation and care management support to families who are working to provide the best support they can for older family members. About three-quarters of Lisa’s time is spent in the community. She also runs a Take Charge of Your Aging group at Sunrise at Fox Hill. When she is in the office, she is running a support group for people with memory loss and their caregivers she started with Iona colleague Bill Amt. Lisa’s background in curriculum design was instrumental in her development of Iona’s popular Memory Fitness class designed for people who have not been diagnosed with memory loss and who are interested in maintaining brain health, now running Mondays at 10:30 am at Iona.
Young@Heart’s Return to the Warner Theatre

“Another magical and inspirational evening,” said Blair Kutrow, the president of Iona’s Board of Directors, as the capacity crowd swirled around her after the show. The Young@Heart chorus and director Bob Cilman were genuinely delighted to be back in Washington, DC and did a cover of hometown punk band Fugazi to prove that it was one of their favorite cities on tour. The accolades that have poured in from Iona friends for the show signal not only a triumphant return for the chorus but also high praise for the elegant Warner Theatre, described by past Board president Wendy Feldman Block as a “a classy dame and there’s nothing else like it in DC. Sort of like Iona.”

Photos by Sarah Walker
November 10, 2011
Artist-in-residence Mickey Klein conducts a workshop at Active Wellness at St. Alban’s
12:30 pm

November 15, 2011
Wellness Day: Flu shot clinic, free trial fitness classes, free memory screening and Sibley Doctors educational events at Iona.
10:00 am-2 pm

January 19, 2012
Lunch and Learn with glass artists Jill Tannenbaum and Varda Avnisan at Iona 12:30.
12:30-1:30 pm

January 26, 2012
Lunch and Learn with painter George H. Smith Shomari at Iona.
12:30-1:30 pm

February 10, 2012
Meet the Artist Reception at Iona
5-8 pm

You can make a difference to an older person who is food insecure:

Make a donation to Iona at www.iona.org. Iona receives only 46% of the budget necessary to run our meal programs through the DC Office on Aging. We rely on philanthropy to get food to people who are isolated and homebound.

Donate six packs or a case of Ensure, Ensure Plus, Boost or Glucerna. Iona no longer receives this vital nutritional supplement from the city to give to seniors who are ill or recovering from surgery or cancer.

Buy a $25 gift card to Safeway or Giant. These cards make all the difference to an older person in the community who calls Iona for help.

Your donations will be gratefully accepted at 4125 Albemarle Street, NW, just one block from Tenleytown Metro, Monday – Friday from 9 am – 5 pm.