

Chicago Heights Mayor Anthony DeLuca reports several programs that benefit senior citizens in his community. The Community Nutrition Network (CNN) serves seniors (aged 60 and older) a daily nutritional lunch for a suggested minimum donation of \$2.25 per person, every Monday through Friday, from 11:30 a.m. to noon in the lower-level of the city's municipal building. When seniors sign up for lunch, they receive a free continental breakfast, served daily between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Additionally, a hot breakfast is also offered twice a week every Friday, plus one other day that rotates. CNN also provides the Meals-On-Wheels service for homebound individuals who wish to arrange daily home delivery, with prices ranging between \$2.25 and \$2.85 per each meal. The meals are made by a registered dietician and are prepared with the seniors' health and nutritional needs in mind: they are heart-healthy, no salt added, and sugar-free.

The City of Chicago Heights also offers free senior activities; include bingo and cards daily, and monthly holiday or "theme" parties. On occasion, trips are planned to get the seniors out and about, for example, to one of the local casinos, or Chicago's Navy Pier.

Also at no cost, on the 2nd Wednesday of every month, a doctor of podiatry provides complete foot care and podiatry exams for seniors who want to ensure their spring stays in their step. From time to time, special guest speakers are scheduled to help explain and discuss issues that are important to seniors, such as the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

For further information on these Chicago Heights senior programs, call (708) 756-5350.

State Representative Angelo "Skip" Saviano reports that the Illinois House rejected a pay raise, citing the continuing rise of gasoline prices, which is severely hurting family budgets because of the impact on household items. Saviano says that a raise is not appropriate when people are losing their jobs and homes.

The state's Compensation Review Board sets the pay raises for judges, legislators and other state officials, including the governor. This year, the review board recommended boosting the base salary for lawmakers by 1 percent. The identical resolution must now be voted on by the Senate. The Senate must oppose the pay raise or else the income boost will go into effect July 1.

Currently, Saviano says the State of Illinois has a \$750 million shortfall in the state budget. He notes that if we can't afford the programs that we already have set in place, then a raise for legislators, judges and even the governor is not fiscally responsible.

School districts with driver education programs will be required to purchase vehicles made in America under a measure passed out of the Illinois House of Representatives by State Rep. John D'Amico. D'Amico says that with the current downturn in the economy, it is important that we spend our tax dollars on American-made products. D'Amico adds that tax dollars contributed by Americans should be used to purchase goods that put Americans to work.

D'Amico's House Bill 4387 requires school boards to purchase American made vehicles for their driver's education programs. Currently there are no parameters as to what type of vehicle a schools board must purchase with tax dollars for their driver education program. The bill, which is supported by the AFL-CIO and United Auto Workers, passed the House and moves to the Senate for further consideration.

Funding for several critical road projects in the 65th District has been allocated in the Illinois Dept. of Transportation's (IDOT) six-year road plan, according to State Rep. Rosemary Mulligan. The \$93 million in funding include: \$3.5 million for resurfacing Busse Hwy from U.S. 14 (Dempster) to Touhy Ave.; \$2.2 million for resurfacing 1.78 miles of Busse Rd. from IL 58 (Golf Rd) to IL 72 (Higgins Rd.); \$850,000 for resurfacing 1.21 miles of Cumberland Ave. from Belle Plaine Ave. to IL 72 (Higgins Rd.); \$250,000 for phase I engineering for improvements to DePlaines River Rd. from U.S. 12 (Rand Rd.) to Devon Ave. Mulligan notes that funding for these projects is needed to keep families safe and to continue improvements for the district.

This column is written by Nina Albano Vidmer, executive director of the Italian American Political Coalition. To submit information, please fax to 708-401-0360 by the first of each month for consideration in the following month's issue.