



FOCUS

The Source for Business,
Management, News, and
Policy Information

NOVEMBER 2008

Vol. 14 No. 11

Vermont Initiates Mobile Voting Project For Long Term Care Residents

Some senior Vermont voters in assisted living residences cast ballots for president in a unique mobile voting project aimed at increasing voter participation within assisted living communities and nursing facilities.

Up to 60 assisted living and skilled nursing facilities were expected to participate in the pilot program, according to Vermont's Secretary of State Deborah Markowitz.

"Our election process is strengthened when voting is accessible to all," says Leslie Hammond, Vermont Health Care Association (VHCA) director of Residential Care and Assisted Living services. "We will be watching very closely to see how this process works in this election cycle, and what we can learn from it to improve voting access in the future."

If successful, the mobile voting project could be deployed in other states. While Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, and others use mobile voting polls for individuals with low incomes who have trouble getting to a polling location, the Vermont project is unique in that it focuses solely on voters in long term care communities. Under the pilot project, two bipartisan voting officials, who have been trained to assist people with cognitive impairment, will set up registration and voting in an assisted living community and then assist each resident who wishes to vote personally on a particular day.

Residents direct the bipartisan officials to mark a ballot according to their wishes. Since the officials have been trained to work with residents with cognitive impairments, if a resident could not make a selection, the vote is not counted, according to the Secretary of State.

How those election workers interact with residents with cognitive impairments is of interest to VHCA.

Mobile Voting, continued on page 6

2008 'State Of Seniors Housing' Report Released

A new report on seniors housing has found that the average length of stay in a community of an assisted living resident was 21 months and that the average resident turnover in a community was 55.1 percent during 2007.

Assisted living providers can find these statistics and other current financial operating metrics in the recently released "State of Seniors Housing 2008" annual report.

The 16th annual report summarizes data collected from 1,168 independent living, continuing care retirement, and assisted living communities with 125,500 independent and assisted living units and nursing beds located throughout the United States.

The survey data, collected in 2008, describe financial results for the 12 months ending nearest to Dec. 31, 2007. This annual report is a collaborative research project published by the American Seniors Housing Association, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, and the National Investment Center for the Seniors Housing & Care Industry.

The medians of four key financial indicators of both for-profit and nonprofit assisted living communities are:

- Occupancy, 93.8 percent;
- Resident turnover, 55.1 percent;
- Reported year-to-year in-house rent increases, 5.6 percent; and
- Operating margins, 29.7 percent.

Assisted living communities exclusively serving residents with Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias had a median annual resident turnover rate of

Seniors Housing, continued on page 3

Inside Focus

2. Quality: Step III Winners' Assisted Living Divisions Are Part Of Pursuit Of Excellence

4. Services: Residents Now Eligible For Coupon For Digital TV Converter Boxes

5. Programs: Employee Incentive Program Produces Benefits For Residents

Step III Winners Say Pursuit Of Quality Provides Lessons In Care Excellence

Assisted living staff members at Good Shepherd Hall, The Summit, and Clement Manor celebrated when their organizations were recognized with a Step III AHCA/NCAL Quality award.

These continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) belong to the Benedictine Health System and provide skilled nursing; assisted living; and a variety of other rehabilitation, day care, and education services. The assisted living directors and staff members were intricately involved in delivering high-quality care to their residents. The quality of that care was quantified through survey results.

Good Shepherd Hall, a 53-apartment building, and The Summit, a 19-bed building, are the assisted living divisions of the Villa St. Vincent (VSV) campus located in Crookston, Minnesota. Clement Manor, located in Greenfield, a suburb of Milwaukee, has a 201-apartment assisted and independent living complex and has the capacity to care for 166 nursing facility patients. Clement Manor also has a Center for Enrichment, adult day services, and child day care center.

These Step III Award winners are recognized for effectively demonstrating by approach, deployment, and level and consistency of results that they are “best-in-class.” At both campuses, examiners confirmed that these communities are demonstrating the highest qualities of care and services to residents, staff members, family members, and the surrounding communities on a daily basis.

“Our core competencies are faith-based care, hospitality, and customer service,” says Jill Brown, VSV’s quality management coordinator. VSV’s assisted living division monitored outcomes such as resident satisfaction survey responses on assisted living spiritual care and staff retention rates, which were linked with staff improvements, and key elements that helped them exceed customers’ expectations, according to Brown.

These CCRCs’ assisted living components use *MyInnerView* services to survey resident, family, and employee satisfaction levels. The Summit and Good Shepherd Hall residents, who participated in the surveys, were given the survey results in a memo and further learned about them at a resident council meeting.

Clement Manor developed a quality structure that involved the staff and measured several quality indicators. The assisted living quality indicators that were reviewed and subjected to systematic improvement processes included falls, medication errors, skin integrity, and interviews with residents on activity programs and services. The process of reviewing and analyzing data and implementing processes had positive results, including raising resident satisfaction levels with dining services and reducing staff response



Step III, continued on page 3

Apply Now For A Quality Award

Showcase your quality to your community.

The AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award is public recognition of your facility’s quality achievements. Facilities may apply for recognition and awards at three levels, each of which requires a more detailed and comprehensive demonstration of systematic quality.

The application process itself delivers great benefits, among them:

- Gain a true picture of your mission, goals, and customer expectations
- Assess and maximize your facility’s strengths
- Receive customized feedback and solutions to improve performance
- Increase your performance management, planning, training, and assessment proficiencies

Application Procedures

All nursing facilities, assisted living residences, and developmental disability (DD) residential services providers that are members in good standing of AHCA or NCAL are eligible to participate.

Please visit AHCA.org or NCAL.org for full eligibility requirements and to download an application packet. **Completed Step I applications must be submitted by Feb. 27, 2009, and Step II and III applications by March 31, 2009.**

“The application process focused the center’s team by providing the pathway and the foundation to identify successes and communicate performance excellence by quantifiable indicators. In the journey to the Step I level, it brought the team together around performance practices and capabilities and helped us enhance our business plan, incorporating our mission statement and stakeholder’s needs. The Step II level has given us the platform to expand our pursuit of excellence, by sharing our best practice models with others and becoming visible leaders in our community.”

—Ira M. Schoenberger
Senior Administrator, Heritage Hall East
2002 Step I, 2003 Step II, and
2005 Step III Recipient



2008 Report Available

Seniors Housing, continued from page 1
70 percent.

During 2007, the average length of stay in assisted living communities specializing in dementia and Alzheimer's care was slightly more than 17 months, compared with 21 months for all assisted living residences.

The report presents findings by property type for occupancy; resident turnover; staffing ratios and labor costs; food costs; management fees; employee benefits; property liability and workers' compensation insurance costs; and financial performance indicators, including operating margins, debt service coverage ratios, and return on investment.

Copies of "The State of Seniors Housing 2008" can be purchased for \$150 at www.seniorshousing.org. Click on "Bookstore."

Step II, continued from page 2

times to resident calls, explains Dennis Ferger, administrator, and Greg Szpak, director of resident services.

Both sets of leaders say it took them several years to attain the Step III award. VSV applied for Step I in 2005 and earned its Step II in 2007. Ferger says

Clement Manor began working on quality initiatives in 2000. The leaders encourage other assisted living providers to apply and stick with the Quality Awards program because it is a great learning process. The leaders

say their community's learning processes are among some of the greatest rewards of applying for the Step I, II, and III

awards.

"The improvement we learned in the past three years was tremendous. We grew in leaps and bounds. I would recommend this process for any assisted living administrator and encourage people to have fun with the process," says Ferger.

"The improvement we learned in the past three years was tremendous. We grew in leaps and bounds. I would recommend this process for any assisted living administrator and encourage people to have fun with the process," says Ferger.

"Writing these progressive step applications is a great opportunity for assisted living. The Step III application process affirmed what we have known all along," says Brown. "There is always something to improve

upon. Yet it is also a time to celebrate the hard work and dedication of so many staff members."

Call For Presentations

Begins: September 1, 2008 | Ends: November 24, 2008

All submissions must be received by November 24, 2008. Applications should be submitted electronically beginning September 1, 2008. For more information visit www.ahcaconvention.org.



QUALITY CARE PLUS

AHCA • NCAL

60th Annual Convention & Expo

October 4 - 7, 2009 • McCormick Place • Chicago, IL

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living are seeking presentations from professionals in long term care. Presentations should focus on practical applications, insights, success stories, and inspiring ideas that you can share with your colleagues in the Professional Development Seminars at our 2009 convention to be held in Chicago, IL, October 4 - 7, 2009. We are looking to showcase the best and the brightest minds in the long term care profession.

You are invited to submit a seminar proposal for consideration. The focus for the AHCA/NCAL 2009 convention program will include content that supports our mission of care to the long term care community. Don't miss this opportunity to share your expertise with other professionals.



Assisted Living Residents Eligible For Coupon To Obtain A Converter Box For Digital Television Conversion

A recent change in the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications, and Information Administration (NTIA) regulation allows residents of licensed assisted living residences to request a \$40 coupon for a converter box that would enable a television using an antenna to receive television signals when TV broadcasters switch to digital signals on Feb. 17, 2009.

NTIA's regulation was changed following formal comments from AHCA/NCAL. NTIA specifically followed the association's recommendations to expand the definition of nursing homes to include assisted living and developmental disabilities facilities and also chose to refrain from requiring long term care residents the additional burden

of providing their Social Security number as part of the application process.

Under the new regulation, residents of licensed assisted living residences are required to provide their name and the address of the residence, and whether they receive television exclusively with an antenna or through cable, satellite, or other pay-television service. The assisted living resident, a family member, or a representative from the licensed residence may apply for one coupon for each resident. The coupon, however, will be mailed directly to the resident.

To apply, print out the "Application for Nursing Home Residents," online at www.DTV2009.gov, or request one by phone at (888) 388-2009, by fax at (877) 388-4632, or send by mail to P.O.

Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208. Callers who are deaf or hard of hearing may dial (877) 530-2634 (English) or (866) 495-1161 (Spanish).

NTIA suggests that applicants should buy their converter boxes soon after their coupons arrive. Consumers will receive a list of participating local, phone, and online retailers with their coupons.

Once consumers have purchased a converter box, they should connect the boxes to their analog TVs immediately and follow the installation and channel-scanning instructions, and antenna adjustments if needed. This provides the opportunity to test the converter box and troubleshoot potential problems prior to the transition date.



2009 AHCA/NCAL
**QUALITY
SYMPOSIUM:**
INSPIRING EXCELLENCE
IN LONG TERM CARE

AHCA/NCAL QUALITY SYMPOSIUM

FEBRUARY 5-6, 2009

ST. LOUIS RENAISSANCE GRAND
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI



Sponsored by: My InnerView, PointRight,
Silverchair Learning Systems,
and Vocollect Healthcare Systems

Plan to attend the inaugural AHCA/NCAL Quality Symposium: Inspiring Excellence in Long Term Care! This conference will showcase many journeys toward performance excellence and provide a dynamic forum for exchanging innovative ideas and best practices. No matter where you are in your journey, you'll be inspired and enabled to better lead your organization to sustain results that meet and exceed the expectations of those you serve.

This intense day-and-a-half conference represents value. Fifteen sessions are encompassed into 3 main symposium tracks: Leadership, Results, and Information Systems. AHCA/NCAL has requested 12.5 hours of continuing education units for nursing home administrators, assisted living administrators, and nurses.

Registration Fee

Member rate is \$275 and non-member rate is \$375.

The registration deadline is January 21, 2009.

For information and online registration visit
www.ahcancal.org/events/qualitysymposium/

PRE-SYMPOSIUM WORKSHOP – FEBRUARY 4, 2009

Leadership Excellence: The Exceptional Long Term Care Leader Self Assessment System.

The full-day workshop provides the opportunity for leaders to benchmark their leadership skill proficiency and to design a personal action-plan to enhance their leadership abilities. Earn an additional six CEUs.

* The pre-symposium workshop requires an additional registration fee of \$75.



Southern Indiana Owner Provides Unique Employee, Resident Programs At Residences

An employee incentive program rewarding staff for perfect attendance and fully occupied assisted living residences pays off in big dividends, says Diederick van der Velde, owner of four assisted living and independent communities in southern Indiana, and one in Ohio.

During the past 30 months, van der Velde says, his residences have not lost a day of revenue, overtime costs have been low, employee turnover rate has been less than 5 percent, and his communities are occupied.

Here is how the employee incentive program works. Frontline caregivers are eligible for a \$50 to \$100 bonus added to their paycheck if they worked all their scheduled shifts during the previous month, and the property averages 98 percent occupancy or higher. Managers receive bonuses if the community remained above 98 percent occupied during the previous month. Attendance and occupancy are inextricably tied to each other, says van der Velde.

"You can't put a price on the continuity of care that happens day in and day out with the residents because staff members show up to work their scheduled shifts," he says.

Van der Velde implemented the incentive program four years ago when he purchased his first independent and assisted living community called Riverbend, located in Jeffersonville, Ind. A veteran manager of long term care communities, van der Velde knew that when he became an owner he would make the employees a priority, because they translate into good care for the residents of the community.

"The most important people are the employees," he says. "I tell my employ-

ees they are the most important people to me."

His investment in employees has returned in kind. Since becoming an owner in 2004, he has retained almost all his 211 original employees. Van der Velde is happy to be working for himself, creating a great work environment for his employees, and providing excellent care to residents.

"It's great to come to work and work with great employees who want to work with you and care for residents. In return, it makes for a very happy and productive environment, especially for the residents," he says.

Van der Velde also has designed unique programs for residents. One example is the Guardian Angel program. The Guardian Angel is an employee whose sole focus is to spend about 30 to 45 minutes a day with individuals who have recently moved into the residence.

"The goal of the Guardian Angel is to find out what the resident likes to do and to get to know the individual," he says. When people first move in it can be disorienting and nerve wracking to adjust to their new home, and River Bend had found that a part-time employee working 20 hours a week dedicated to learning about new residents helped them adjust. "The program makes people feel part of the community much faster," he says, adding, "Sometimes the employee plays cards with the new resident, or watches 'The Price is Right,' or listens to the resident talk about the recently deceased spouse, or current grandchildren."

Another special program for residents is A Taste of the Town. Van der Velde invites a local restaurant to cater a meal for the residents on the first Wednesday of each month. The resident council

selects the local restaurant. The residence invites the restaurant to cater a meal using restaurant staff.

The residents benefit because they get to try something different. The restaurant benefits from the exposure to residents, who recommend the restaurant to their adult children who want to take their parents out for a lunch or dinner. Van der Velde says staff get a break from serving but also are exposed to watching the customer service techniques used by the restaurant's wait staff.

"Overall, my goal is to run good, quality properties that you would want to put your parents or grandparents in," van der Velde says, and a lot of people in southern Indiana do place their parents in his residences. Recently he added on to an existing residence, and before it opened, he was sold out and had a waiting list of clients eager to move in.

AHCA And NCAL Sponsor AHLA: LTC and the Law

AHCA and NCAL are once again sponsoring the American Health Lawyers Association annual Long Term Care and the Law conference, which will be held in Las Vegas, at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, Feb. 25-27, 2009. The Long Term Care and the Law program focuses on educational sessions targeting nursing facility and assisted living providers and attorneys and gives AHCA/NCAL membership a discounted registration.

For more information, send an e-mail to Dianne De La Mare at ddelamare@ahca.org.

NCAL Elects New Board Officers And Directors For 2008-2009 Term

NCAL's new officers and directors for the board of directors' 2008-2009 term were elected and sworn in during the 59th Annual AHCA/NCAL Convention & Expo held in Nashville.

The newly elected officers are:

- **NCAL chair**, Howie Groff, president of Tealwood Care Centers, Bloomington, Minn.;
- **NCAL vice chair**, Nicolette Merino, regional director of operations, Avamere, Wilsonville, Ore.; and
- **NCAL secretary/treasurer**, Michael Shepard, chief executive officer (CEO) of The Shepard Group, Pine Bluff, Ark.

The newly elected board members, who will serve a two-year term ending in 2010, are:

- Deb Choma, nurse administrator, Shard Villa, Salisbury, Vt.;
- Vickie Cox, executive administrator, Heritage at Dover, Dover, Del.;
- Jeffrey Hyatt, owner of Hyatt Family Facilities, Yakima, Wash.;
- Christian Mason, CEO of Vigilant Corp., Woodburn, Ore.;
- Jan Thayer, owner and CEO of Riverside Lodge Retirement Community, Grand Island, Neb.; and
- Kristin West, vice president of operations, Kemper Co., Strongsville, Ohio.

The newly elected board members join members whose terms will expire in October 2009:

- Nancy Andrews, director of housing and assisted living for

Valley Memorial Homes, Grand Forks, N.D.;

- Jim Birchem, president and CEO of ElderCare of Minnesota, Bemidji, Minn.;
- Edie Gerelli, vice president of operations for Chelsea Senior Living, Summit, N.J.;
- Patricia Giorgio, president and CEO of Evergreen Estates, Cedar Rapids, Iowa;
- Joe Perkin, regional director for Midwest Health Management, Topeka, Kan.;
- Dean Solden, president of Solden Development Co., Ann Arbor, Mich.; and
- Faun Spencer, owner of Twilight Care, Minnetonka, Minn.

Vermont Initiative Seeks To Improve Access For Assisted Living Residents

Mobile Voting, continued from page 1

"We will be particularly interested in how the Secretary of State is determining if the person has the capacity to vote and what kind of assistance is appropriate to help that person cast a ballot," says Hammond.

The project is the result of years of study on how to best respect the rights of residents with disabilities in long term care facilities, according to Jason Karlawish, associate professor of medicine and medical ethics at the University of Pennsylvania. The intent is to maximize voter access while minimizing the opportunity for fraud.

Absentee ballots are often delivered to long term care communities, but accusations of voter fraud arise because the ballots are left at the facility and officials return for them when voting is completed. The mobile voting unit will eliminate this problem by maintaining control of

the ballots through the process, Markowitz says. It also eliminates the need for residents to send a letter to the local town clerk to obtain an absentee ballot. Voters at long term care communities will be able to register and vote in one visit. Up to 30 assisted living and 30 nursing facilities in the state are expected to participate, she says.

"We are excited about this pilot project and hope that it will show us whether we can better serve hard-to-reach Vermonters," says Markowitz. "As our population ages, we expect that an increasingly large percentage of our voters will be living, at some point, in a long term care setting. It is the goal of this project to ensure that residents of

long term care facilities are provided meaningful opportunities to vote while minimizing the risk of fraud or abuse."

The results of the project will be sent to other state election officials through

"As our population ages, we expect that an increasingly large percentage of our voters will be living, at some point, in a long term care setting. It is the goal of this project to ensure that residents of long term care facilities are provided meaningful opportunities to vote while minimizing the risk of fraud or abuse."

the National Association of Secretaries of State and the National Association of Election Officials.

Under federal laws—the Help America Vote Act of 2002, the Voting Rights Act, and the

Americans with Disabilities Act—states are required to provide accessibility to polling places and options for all voters who seek to vote privately and independently.



Enrolling In NCAL-MyInnerView's Satisfaction Initiative Has Benefits

With only two months left until the end of the year, now is the time to join NCAL's and MyInnerView's (MIV's) Customer and Employee Satisfaction Initiative.

To keep it clear and simple, below is a condensed version of the benefits participants receive in this initiative:

- You'll understand what truly matters most to your customers and employees. Using the evidence-based data collected through this initiative, you will begin to see clearly what is important to your customers and employees, and you'll have the data needed to make evidence-based decisions.

- You'll have a means to analyze your data. Traditional data sources churn out mounds of spreadsheets that offer only data—no reports, no next steps, and no evidence-based data to drive your

"This initiative provides the assisted living profession with reputable, independent measurements of its ability to provide a quality product. In order for the assisted living story to be told correctly, we must tell it!"

quality-improvement agenda.

Through this initiative, not only do participants have a turnkey process for collecting data, MIV's reporting options allow participants to generate reports, analyze their findings, and drive performance improvement.

- You'll move your organization and your profession forward along the quality journey.

This initiative provides the assisted living profession with reputable,

independent measurements of its ability to provide a quality product. In order for the assisted living story to be told correctly, we must tell it!

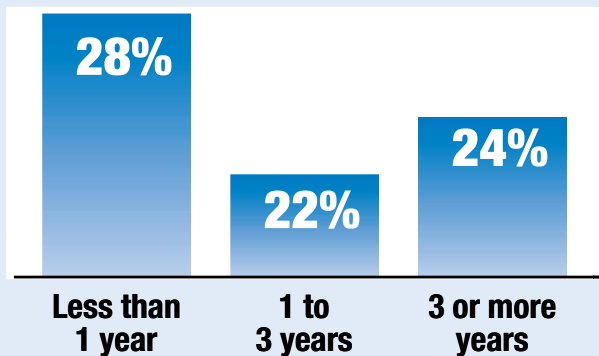
This initiative allows assisted living to do just that by strengthening its unified voice through feedback from those that matter most—residents and employees.



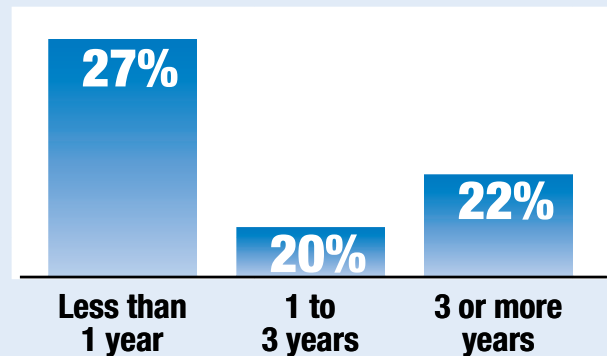
To learn about additional benefits, the minimal investment associated with this initiative, and the turnkey nature of this opportunity, contact MIV's Julie Flaig Smith at (952) 697-2252 or visit www.myinnerview.com.

Perception of dining experience changes over time

Meal variety rated "Excellent" by residents



Food appeal rated "Excellent" by residents



Scores represent the percent of assisted living residents—categorized by length of stay in the assisted living community—who rated these survey items as "Excellent."

Source: Assisted living resident satisfaction surveys conducted in 2007 by My InnerView Inc.

MY INNERVIEW
BECAUSE KNOWING MORE MATTERS MOST™



Tool Developed To Assess Assisted Living Building Environment Shows Promise

Research from a Texas A&M architecture professor has resulted in a tool that can measure senior living environments, making it possible to correlate residents' health and satisfaction outcomes with the physical environment of the assisted living buildings.

Susan Rodiek, a professor of architecture at Texas A&M University, College Station, developed and tested the reliability of an assessment instrument proving it to be reliable, according to the article on the research published in the *2008 Seniors Housing and Care Journal*. The journal article won the GE Award for Best Research Paper.

The instrument can be fine-tuned into a checklist that designers of senior living environments can use to benefit residents and providers, Rodiek wrote.

"The concept behind this evaluation tool can be adapted by both providers and design practitioners for use in practical projects" by choosing different facets of the physical environment to evaluate, Rodiek wrote.

According to the journal article, the 63-item instrument received validity testing in a multiregional study conducted at six randomly selected assisted living facilities that involved 1,569 respondents. The researchers' environmental ratings significantly correlated with resident questionnaire responses on most items.

"By making environmental evaluations more quantifiable and reliable, it became possible to compare health- and satisfaction-related outcomes associated with physical environments," Rodiek wrote.

NCAL is the assisted living voice of the American Health Care Association. NCAL Focus (ISSN: 1095-5585) is published monthly by the American Health Care Association (AHCA), 1201 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright © 2008 by AHCA.

Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written authorization from the copyright holder. NCAL or AHCA members' subscription fees are included in membership dues. AHCA is the nation's largest federation of assisted living, nursing facility, and subacute providers. AHCA has 47 affiliated organizations, together representing more than 10,000 individual facility members.

Editor: Lisa Gelhaus

Manager, Focus Production:

Shevona Johnson

NCAL Board of Directors: Howie Groff (Chair), Steve Ackerson, Nancy Andrews, Jim Carlson, Deb Choma, Vickie Cox, Edie Gerelli, Patricia Giorgio, Jeffrey Hyatt, Brad Klitsch, Christian Mason, Nicolette Merino, Rick Miller, Van Moore, Kathleen Collins Pagels, Joe Perkin, Michael Shepard, Faun Spencer, Dean Solden, Jan Thayer, Robert Van Dyk, Yrene Waldron, Kristin West.

Your suggestions and feedback about NCAL FOCUS are welcome. Contact Lisa Gelhaus by e-mail (lgelhaus@ncal.org), by phone (202-898-2825), or by writing to the address above.

