

# Munson Senior Center holds special health expo

## 50 to Forever showcases products and services available to the seniors

By BETHANY CONWAY  
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Kicking off the month of September with a bang, the City of Las Cruces and the Munson Senior Center are providing a great day for seniors.

The 50 to Forever Senior Expo will take place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 10, at the Munson Senior Center, 975 S. Mesquite St.

From local vendors to the event's keynote speaker, seniors will have much to take in on the resources provided to them in Las Cruces, and all are welcome to attend this free event.

"This is our first year," said Imelda Chacon, Resource Center coordinator at the Munson Senior Center, who also spear headed the event. "We are eventually going to have more in the future depending on how this one goes."

With support groups there to give advice and all the information seniors need on insurance, nursing homes and hospice, Chacon is confident that every senior will find what they are looking for at the event.

"This is to get vendors from the community to bring resources to our seniors," she said.

"We have vendors from nursing homes, Mesilla Valley Hospice, the Abilities Center, insurance agencies, travel agencies, veterans information and breast and prostate cancer support groups. We will also have medical supply stores and the animal shelter is going to come in and see if any of our seniors want to adopt a pet."

After the expo, seniors can migrate to the Munson Center Auditorium where Lena Smith will give a presentation entitled, "The Future of Aging in New Mexico: The Time for Action is Now."

A native Las Cruces, Smith has 25 years of experience in the field of aging, health care and elder programs. She earned her doctorate from the University of New Mexico where she focused her research in the area of aging, dementia,

spirituality, stress and coping. Over the years, Smith has worked with seniors as a licensed social worker, licensed nursing home administrator and as an owner and operator of Alzheimer's care facilities in New Mexico.

Smith is a frequent presenter to community groups and has presented to national audiences including the national Alzheimer's Association, the American Society on Aging and affiliates of the American Health Care Association. She has also presented her own findings at major Alzheimer's conferences in the United States.

She will be opening a new Alzheimer's care facility in Albuquerque called The Retreat in early 2009.

For those looking for information on any resources available for seniors, the 50 to Forever Senior Expo is the place. Best of all, it's free.

"It's just to bring community resources to anyone over 50," Chacon said "A lot of people are not aware of what's out there. There are different programs to keep them healthy and keep them going."



SMITH

## More in state without insurance

### U.S. Census: New Mexico's poverty rate and median household income unchanged

The U.S. Census Bureau's annual release of data on poverty, median household income and health-insurance coverage presents a mixed picture.

There was a small but significant increase in the percentage of people in New Mexico who do not have health insurance. It rose from 20.1 percent in 2004-05 to 22.7 percent in 2006-07 for an increase of 2.6 percent. Nationally, the increase in uninsured people was .5 percent. New Mexico still has the second-highest rate of residents without health insurance in the nation.

But the two other indicators of financial well being – the percentage of New Mexicans living below the poverty line (15.5 percent) and

the median income for New Mexico households (\$42,760) – were basically unchanged.

"This is a disappointing result, since the last two years were generally very good for the state economy as measured by personal income and job growth," said Gerry Bradley, Research Director for New Mexico Voices for Children and its research arm, the Fiscal Policy Project.

"Given this economic growth, we would have hoped to see a more significant drop in the poverty rate," Bradley added. "The measures just passed in the special session will improve living standards for families, so we are making progress."