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options for independence

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# THE GOOD LIFE

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## LifePath Celebrates 2025 SHINE Graduates

*By Janis Merrell, Editor of The Good Life*

Janis Merrell

Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 in D Major* could be heard from LifePath's conference room on July 11, as eight out of ten new 2025 SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) graduates received their certificates and roses.

As newly-certified SHINE

counselors, these volunteers will work in their own communities to provide free and unbiased health insurance information, education, and assistance services to Medicare beneficiaries and adults with disabilities.

Lorraine York-Edberg, SHINE Regional Program Director, conducted the intensive 60-hour training and served as the master of ceremonies at the graduation. "During our training there were several healthcare regulation changes that occurred. This class has been great in adapting to the ever-changing regulation challenges of our healthcare system and reacting positively to adversity," said York-Edberg.

Kyra DeCarlo, Assistant Director of the SHINE Program, explained how the graduates would help in their communities: "Of our ten new graduates, eight are donating their time as volunteers, while two are adding SHINE as one of the many services they provide at the Senior Centers they work in. We are lucky to have some of our newly-trained counselors helping out in towns that are in need of more SHINE assistance such as Northampton, Westfield, and Greenfield. While their training has been completed, they are now mentoring with seasoned counselors to put into practice what they have learned and be ready to assist during our busy Open Enrollment Period."

Teddy Doucette, based at the Shelburne Senior Center, retook the training after a three-year break. He explained he was motivated to "save people the most amount of money who have the most amount of needs, and to help them gain access to services they don't know about."

When asked her reason to become a SHINE counselor, Katie Hereld said, "I was a nurse case manager for the second half of my career, and in that role I was advocating for people getting the services that they need. I want to continue to advocate for them now that I have retired." She will be located at the Easthampton Senior Center.

Robert Brooks will be volunteering in the Amherst area. He wanted to be a SHINE counselor because he is a volunteer for the AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide Program and realized "Medicare is always a big issue with the people I help and because I was doing taxes, they thought I knew about Medicare, so I decided to give it a shot—I wanted to get trained to do this in the off-tax season."

SHINE graduate Michelle Murdock, who works as a Veterans' Service Officer for the Town of Southampton, explained her motivation, saying, "It all kind of came together because they had a position available as an outreach worker, and one of the criteria is going through the SHINE training. It just made sense because it all coincides with what I do, and when I speak to a veteran that's not eligible for VA benefits, now I'm able to help them out in regard to Medicare."

Susan Rogers, who will be providing SHINE counseling at the Northampton Senior Center, said she wanted to volunteer because, "I felt in the current political situation that I wanted to do something." She was inspired by a friend who is a SHINE counselor to become one herself.

New SHINE graduate Laurie Marshall will also be providing counseling at the Northampton Senior Center. She described choosing to be a SHINE counselor after reading a local newsletter: "I retired in December, and I would read the *Conz Street Chronicle* every month, and Lorraine wrote this beautiful piece about SHINE in there, and said they were looking for counselors. The second I read it, I'm like, 'that's what I'm gonna do' because it was continuing to help people and work with the public." About York-Edberg, Marshall added, "Lorraine is an awesome instructor, and her work with SHINE is very, very much appreciated."

Katherine Orcutt, who will be providing SHINE counseling in the Colrain, Shelburne, and Greenfield areas, explained, "I wanted to do this for some time, but I have always been working. In fact, I looked into it probably 10 to 15 years ago, but it required too much time off from work to do the training. I just retired last year, after working a lot with elders. At my last job, I was an Elder Care Specialist for an Employee Assistance Program, so it made me, in the very beginning, have to go to the Medicare website to do some research. And it was fascinating to me, like a big puzzle."



L to R: Lynne Feldman, MBA, Associate Executive Director, LifePath; SHINE graduate Laurie Marshall; Kathleen Gouveia, SHINE Training Coordinator, Executive Office of Aging & Independence; SHINE graduate Katherine Orcutt; SHINE graduate Susan Rogers; SHINE graduate Rebecca Hadmack; SHINE graduate Michelle Murdock; SHINE graduate Katie Hereld; Kyra DeCarlo, Assistant Director, SHINE Program; Lorraine York-Edberg, SHINE Regional Program Director; Gary Yuhas, MBA, Executive Director, LifePath; SHINE graduate Teddy Doucette; SHINE graduate Robert Brooks. *Graduates Cara Cartello, who will be volunteering out of Southwick Senior Center, and Susan Cincotta, who will be based at the Westfield Senior Center, were unable to attend.*

SHINE graduate Rebecca Hadmack, who will be providing counseling at the Athol Senior Center, explained her path to becoming a SHINE counselor: "Health insurance is so complicated for the average Joe. To be honest with you, it's not my first love, but I challenged myself to do the program because I wanted to further my knowledge base, improve my skills, and then help others in the community."

Kathleen Gouveia, SHINE Training Coordinator at the Executive Office of Aging & Independence, who celebrated with the graduates, said, "I get a little emotional, because it's nice to actually meet the counselors, talk with them, and learn why they chose to become a SHINE counselor, because the SHINE training is a lot, but you have people that really are so dedicated to learn and become certified and be able to help Medicare beneficiaries in the community. It's just really heartwarming."

*The Medicare Open Enrollment Period is upon us! From October 15–December 7, beneficiaries can review and make changes to their Part D or Advantage plans. Be on the lookout for your Annual Notice of Change letter from your Medicare Prescription Drug and Advantage plans.*

*If you're interested in becoming a SHINE counselor, please visit <https://lifepathma.org/support-our-mission/volunteer/> and fill out the volunteer application. If you have questions about Medicare options, you can consult with SHINE counselors over the phone or in person at some senior centers and other locations. To find a trained and certified counselor in your area, contact the Regional Office at 1-800-498-4232 or call 413-773-5555, ext. 1220. You may also contact your local Council on Aging.*