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The UMass/Boston Friday Report

Volume 2, Number 10
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News and information about and for the
University Community from the Chancellor's Office

Gerontology Institute Reports Number of State's Elderly Living in Poverty Increased in Last Decade

The Gerontology Institute has collaborated with the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research at UMass/Amherst to produce a demographic profile of the state's elderly titled "The Older Population in Massachusetts, 1980-1990." The report (available for \$3 at the Gerontology Institute, located on the 3rd floor of the Wheatley Hall) uses data from the 1980 and 1990 federal Census of Population and Housing. Other data come from the 1990 Current Population Survey, a monthly study that provides the federal government with its official employment statistics. Some of the report's findings on Massachusetts' elderly in the last decade:

- While the poverty rate declined for the overall population in Massachusetts during the 1980s, the number of poor elderly rose from 65,000 to 72,000, an increase of 10.8%. The increase occurred while the state experienced an economic boom during this period and before the current recession.
- The number of residents over 65 increased 15.1% between 1980 and 1990, to 819,284.
- Only about one-third of those over 65 have income from pensions.
- In 1989, more than 60% percent of all older women had incomes of less than \$10,000.
- From 1979 to 1989, the number of elderly receiving public assistance decreased by 10%.
- The number of Massachusetts women and men over age 65 who were employed declined between 1980 and 1990 by 16%, in contrast to a relatively stable national pattern.

According to the report: "The persistence of the poverty rate among the elderly in Massachusetts in the last decade -- at a time when poverty among the elderly was declining nationally -- should be of concern to policymakers. In Massachusetts, the elderly poor not only grew substantially in numbers but also became a larger percentage of the overall population. Further, poverty rates understate the scope of the economic hardship in states with high living costs such as Massachusetts. Of additional concern is the fact that Massachusetts experienced an economic boom and a decline in the poverty rates of people under the age of 65 during this same period. Further, the data do not reflect the economic difficulties that have occurred since 1989."

Kindergarteners at University's Child Development Center Collect Money To Benefit Pine Street Inn Homeless Shelter

Kindergarten students enrolled at the University Child Development Center have collected more than \$300 in change and will present the money to the Pine Street Inn homeless shelter. The children decorated collection cans with Christmas themes, and Sara Kelley, director of the center, then arranged for the cans to be placed at several locations around the Harbor Campus. "We labeled the cans 'Pennies for Pine Street,' but most of the donations that we've received are quarters," Kelley says. "I'm quite surprised, and very thankful, that we've been able to raise this much money. Naturally, the children are very excited about their accomplishment." Kelley says the idea to collect money for the Pine Street Inn was suggested by the children during a classroom discussion about charity. Members of the kindergarten class will present rolls of coins to Pine Street Inn executive director Rich Ring on Wednesday, December 16, at 11:00 a.m., in the Child Development Center offices, at 2 Harbor Point Boulevard (Harbor Point apartment complex).

Institute Helps Protect Rich Marine Resource -- The Urban Harbors Institute played an important role in shaping debates that concluded recently with the passage of federal legislation to protect the Stellwagen Bank area of Massachusetts Bay. Stellwagen Bank, an underwater plateau that extends across Massachusetts Bay from Cape Ann to Cape Cod, is now covered by the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act. The plateau is an area rich in nutrients and marine life, and has long been a valuable resource for commercial fishermen and marine researchers. Its fertile habitat also has attracted endangered species. The new law establishes an overall management plan for Stellwagen Bank that places limits on activities which might threaten its environment. Using a \$20,000 grant from the Center for Marine Conservation, the Urban Harbors Institute in 1989 began an extensive study of Stellwagen Bank. At the conclusion of the study in 1990, the institute held a conference to discuss the findings with marine experts, environmental scientists, economists, fishermen, representatives of state agencies and members of the public. The institute then published a report on the conference and it served as an informational guide for legislators. According to **Richard Delaney**, director of the Urban Harbors Institute, the report helped bring "the legislation to fruition. It provided solid, objective scientific information that served as the basis of the argument in favor of Stellwagen Bank."

Campus Notes -- McCormack Institute Senior Fellow **Richard Hogarty** has been asked by the State Department of Mental Health to serve on its planning council. • At the November meeting of the American Society of Criminology in New Orleans, McCormack Institute Senior Fellow **Al Cardarelli** presented a paper on the increase in the number of unsolved homicides in the United States. • Mathematics and computer science professor **Robert Morris** recently presented two seminars at the University of Paris. They were sponsored by the French Ministry of Research and Technology. • Both the Gerontology Institute and the Ph.D. in Gerontology Program were well represented November 18-22 at the 45th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America in Washington, D.C. Institute Director **Scott Bass**, Research Director **Frank Caro**, Senior Fellow and Professor **Frances Portnoy** and Professor **Frank Porell** presented papers at the conference. Several Ph.D. students also made presentations, including **Jennifer Bottomley**, **Carol Reis**, **Kathy Fabiszewski**, **Karl Kaffenberger**, **Barbara Maloney** and **Barbara Roberge**. • **Yung-Ping Chen**, who holds the University's Manning Eminent Scholar's Chair, delivered a speech on new sources of long-term funding for the elderly at a November 23 meeting of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. • **Gail Hobin**, the University's director of community relations and special events, will be among those gathering at City Hall Plaza on December 14 to help the Boston Police kickoff a new campaign against drinking and driving. • Biology Professor **Eric Strauss** was recently named chair of the Barnstable Conservation Commission. • Three students have been selected winners of the Joseph Webster Scholarship, named after a Boston Edison employee who died in 1986. They are **Phung Phi Pham**, **Shirona Mizrahi**, and **Briget Ngampa**. The awards will be presented on December 16 to the students for having "contributed to brotherhood" on the campus. • The campus fund-raising drive for the 1992 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Campaign (COMEC) will end on Monday, December 14. Some 95 UMass/Boston employees have so far contributed a total of more than \$11,000 to this year's campaign. Employees wishing to make a contribution should complete a pledge card and return it to their COMEC building representative. If you need a pledge card or do not know who your representative is, contact **Sue Baker** or **Harold Horton** at 7-5880.