

OK Conference of Churches Pamela Maisano, Advocate, (405) 525 - 2928 Jan. 10, '08

INFORMATIONAL ALERT: AGING ISSUES / PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARD PROGRAM – Promises Discounts for Everyone

(By Jim Stafford, Business Writer)

Beginning today, Oklahomans can walk into thousands of pharmacies around the nation armed with **a new tool to reduce the price for prescription medicine.**

The Oklahoma Drug Card Program is launching in the state, offering all Oklahomans a free discount card that can be obtained merely by downloading it from www.oklahomadrugcard.com. The card promises Oklahomans savings up to 75% with a claimed average savings of 30% at more than 50,000 national and regional pharmacies.

The card is not affiliated with any state agency but is part of a for-profit company that has developed the program, said Joe D. Willard, Oklahoma program director.

“It covers most of the chains,” Willard said. “There are no applications to fill out, there is no age limit. I don’t know of any chain that does not accept the card.

The Oklahoma Drug Card Program is part of the United Networks of America of Baton Rouge, La. **Oklahoma is the 23rd state into which the drug card program has been introduced.**

“This program was really launched for the uninsured and the underinsured people of Oklahoma to afford them prescription medication,” Willard said. “At the end of 2006 there were 644,000 Oklahomans without insurance, so it was primarily launched for them. - **However, everyone qualifies for the discount card, no matter what insurance they have or which private or public entity provides their coverage: he said. There are no age or income restrictions.**

Phil Woodward, executive director of the Oklahoma Pharmacists Assn., said many chain pharmacies such as Walgreens already provide their own drug cards ... My suggestion would be that people do some shopping around first. Many big chain pharmacies have their own discount cards that are very attractive.” However, he also **said that many company cards, such as the Walgreen’s card, requires a membership fee and can be cancelled by the company. There are no charges or cancellation possibilities for the Oklahoma Drug Card Program, he said.**

“So, what’s the gimmick; how can it be free?” Willard said of the new program ...”Because the drug stores want the traffic, they want people who are there to also shop for (other things) and are willing to discount their drugs to get the traffic.”

For Oklahomans who don’t have access to a computer from which to download and print the card, ANY OKLAHOMA Kmart pharmacy will process and print the cards for customers, Willard said. The program is backed by UNA Rx Card, a division of United Networks of America. Willard said he hopes to expand the program to hospitals, employers and doctors. (Willard was formerly a general agent and managing partner for MassMutual Life Insurance Co. in Tulsa.

Original Info. via April Bortmess, Accounts Executive

Hilb Rogal & Hobbs (One Leadership Square, 211 N. Robinson, Suite 1100N, OKC, OK 73102-7105 (405)552-4846

And via OKCYWCA, Ex Director, Janet Peery (jpeery@okcywca.org)