

## **UPMC Health Plan comes to Crawford County**

*By Valerie Myers*

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UPMC Health Plan is selling Medicare supplemental insurance coverage in Crawford County.

The company expanded operations into Crawford, Clearfield and Greene counties last week. It has sold supplemental insurance plans in Erie County since last year and now does business in 20 western Pennsylvania counties.

UPMC for Life HMO and PPO plans are available as Medicare Advantage plans for Crawford County residents ages 65 and over and the disabled. Meadville Medical Center, Titusville Hospital and Erie's Hamot Medical Center, Saint Vincent Health Center and Millcreek Community hospitals are among participating providers.

"There have been very few options for managed care in Crawford County," said Cathy Batteer, vice president, Medicare, for UPMC Health Plan. "Our UPMC for Life plans are affordable options."

UPMC for Life HMO plans start with a basic package for no additional premium beyond what customers already pay for Medicare Part B coverage. The top-flight HMO is an Rx Enhanced plan offering lower co-pay costs and expanded dental, vision and hearing services for \$72.50 monthly, including Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage costs.

A UPMC for Life PPO Rx Enhanced supplemental plan sells for \$116.50 monthly, including Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage. The plan, like the Rx Enhanced HMO, offers lower co-pay and expanded dental, vision and hearing services.

Preventive health services are available to all UPMC for Life members. Services include membership at participating fitness clubs or DVDs, weights, resistance bands and other basic equipment for in-home fitness programs.

"Concierge" service matches customers with specific customer service representatives

that they can call with questions or concerns. UPMC Health Plans is also sponsoring a new "Vial of Life" program, providing vials and forms to record important health and insurance information to stick to the refrigerator where police, firefighters and emergency medical crews can find it.

"Vial of Life truly can be a lifesaver," said Lee Martell, Medicare outreach specialist at UPMC Health Plan's Erie office.

Martell will lead a series of local informational meetings about UPMC for Life plans, the first at the Hotel Conneaut on Dec. 4. Plan enrollment is open through the end of this year.

Persons already covered by supplemental insurance can switch to UPMC for Life plans through March.

Apprise program counselors at Active Aging Inc. help local senior citizens compare supplemental insurance programs and troubleshoot problems. UPMC Health Plan is welcome into the local mix, said Kathy Freeman, an Apprise counselor at Meadville Senior Center.

"It's a good thing whenever there are more Medicare Advantage plans to choose from," Freeman said.

UPMC Health Plan is a health insurance company owned by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. The \$6 billion UPMC system owns and operates 19 hospitals in western Pennsylvania. Its UPMC Health Plan was recognized last month as one of the top 10 health plans in the country by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.