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LORRAINE SHEEHAN - Edgewater resident Lorraine Sheehan had an unstoppable determination to help the disabled and a grasp of the basics. As a friend put it, she knew that "hard work coupled with justice will prevail."

Sheehan, who died last week at age 72, was elected three times to the House of Delegates, where she introduced legislation on transportation for students with disabilities and on dealing with the Developmental Disabilities Administration's waiting list.

She also was Maryland secretary of state for four years, a commissioner of the Anne Arundel County Housing Authority and a president of the board of directors of The Arc of the United States, as well as the state and local branches.

Her interest in helping the disabled began with the birth of an autistic son, but her work ultimately benefited many thousands. While her passing is mourned, her example will endure.

SEEING IN 2010 - With Christmas behind us, attention will shift to the question of how and where to welcome in the new year. Downtown Annapolis will offer a family-friendly celebration - New Year's Annapolis - whose price compares favorably with a movie ticket plus popcorn.

Venues around the city will offer live music, comedy, dancing, magic, karaoke, ice sculpture - you name it. There will be a 7:30 p.m. fireworks show for the kids as well as the traditional one at midnight.

It's a way to start 2010 with good memories and no hangover. Further information is available at www.newsyearsannapolis.org.

SWINE FLU - While it did give us a nasty flu season, the H1N1 virus - swine flu - has not developed into the lethal

pandemic some researchers and public health professionals warned about.

In part, that was because this flu strain is not as virulent as was first feared. But mainly it's because our public health system functioned well.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated this week that some 60 million people have been vaccinated in the United States - just one-fifth of the population, but apparently enough to slow the rate of infection. Some 47 million Americans have had H1N1 so far.

Now the vaccine is widely available and those not in the original high-risk groups are being encouraged to get the shot; President Barack Obama and the first lady were vaccinated this week.

As long as ample supplies of the vaccine are on hand, public health officials would like to see them used to head off any possible re-emergence later this winter. They're fighting a perception that swine flu is yesterday's story - "H1N1 fatigue" some call it.

This is a problem, but it's a far cry from the problems many were afraid would result from swine flu. Officials need to take what they've learned from fighting H1N1 - including the five-month delay in producing vaccine - and apply it to preparing for the next nasty flu bug. For swine flu will invariably have successors. We may not be as lucky with them.

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