

Aging Futures NEWS

A Publication of the
Aging Futures Project

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Elder Friendly Communities

Communities across the country are aging. Those 85 and older are the fastest-growing segment of the population. In Broome County already 20% of the population is 65 plus.

The active involvement of vital and independent seniors can enhance the social and civic life of communities. At the same time, communities will need to provide services to a growing number of their frail and disabled seniors. The majority of Americans, however, will remain in their homes.

To prepare for this so-called "Age Boom," many communities need help in creating an environment that will support older people's health and well-being as they age. The phenomena is called "Elder-Friendly Communities," and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York has developed a survey and a process for communities to use to rate their "elder-friendliness."

The following is a list of the four indicators of an elder friendly community and some of the essential elements needed. On the right is a possible scenario of a senior.

Addresses Basic Needs

- Affordable housing is available
- Housing is modified to accommodate mobility and safety
- The neighborhoods are livable and safe
- People have enough to eat
- Assistance services are available and residents know how to access them.

Optimizes physical and mental health and well-being

- Community promotes and provides access to necessary and preventative health services
- Opportunities for physical activity are available and used
- Obstacles to use the necessary medical care are minimized
- Palliative care services are available and advertised

Maximizes independence for the frail and disabled

- Transportation is accessible and affordable
- The community service system

Joan is 64 and suffers from fibromyalgia needs. She is alert and competent but she cannot lift, is in constant pain and she often has a foggy memory. Most days she feels "okay" but rarely "great". She has worked hard her whole life but currently is making just a minimum wage. Her savings are depleting quickly. She has already lost her car and lives ¾ mile from the bus route. The doctors recommend that she volunteer to take her mind off her troubles. Medicare won't start for another 10 months but even that amount won't solve all her problems.

Where will Joan live and how will she eat if her illness prevents her from working even at a minimum wage job? How is Broome County elder friendly to her? Because she works part time with no benefits, Joan has enrolled in Family Health Plus, a NYS health insurance program for low income persons. This is a blessing to her independence, but often Joan feels anxious about paying doctors' bills. She is reluctant to see a counselor.

The walk to the bus is good exercise for
Continued on Page 2

Lupardo Challenges Community To Be More "Elder-Friendly"

Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo convened 50 people to discuss how we can make our community Elder Friendly and how we, in Broome County, can respond to our changing demographics. The County Executive, the Mayor of Binghamton and representatives from housing, transportation, law, construction, health and long term care learned how other communities across the nation are redesigning transportation services, planning housing initiatives and making businesses more accessible to the elderly.

In small groups, those in attendance discussed how they thought Binghamton/Broome could become more elder friendly. Jeff Davis facilitated a report out of their ideas. Many of the participants recognize that Broome County already has resources and services that are responsive to seniors. Suggestions about transportation, the business community, social connections, housing and services will be revisited by workgroups in the near futures and integrated into a variety of planning efforts.

Our Mission:
Creating and strengthening community systems, thus enabling persons age 60 and over to maintain the highest quality of life.

650 Callers Reach the Stay Connected – Stay Well Phone Bank

Dr. Shawn Berkowitz was one of four speakers for the WBNG-TV phone bank in January featuring the *Stay Connected – Stay Well* campaign. The phones rang non-stop responding to the lure of our signature product, the 2006 *Stay Connected – Stay Well* calendar. The calendar suggests over 65 ways to connect with others. Other items in the packets, which were sent to over 650 people who called the phone bank, encouraged seniors to engage in the community or with others as a way of staying well.

When asked about the significance of the *Stay Connected – Stay Well* campaign, Dr. Berkowitz of United Health Services Hospitals responded, "Seniors who maintain friendships in the community live longer, healthier and more independent lives."

Four newscasts aired that day at 12 noon, 5, 5:30 and 6 PM. There were three other speakers who answered the questions about Stay Connected – Stay Well. Paul Chambers, Professor Emeritus at Broome Community College, spoke about the value of education throughout life. He recommended education as a way for people to meet others while keeping their brains stimulated. He promoted Lyceum through Binghamton University and the OWLS program of BCC offering full college courses at four Broome County Senior Centers.

"Connections with others lead to improved nutrition, greater opportunities for exercise and less risk of depression. These things together offer less risk of depression; and incidences of heart attack and stroke are reduced."

Tammy Hodges, Director of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), suggested that RSVP can offer the homebound things to do by volunteering from their homes. Steve Brozost, a community volunteer at several agencies, encouraged those with a disability to try to find ways to work with their handicap, to get out and do things with others. Agencies in the community can help.

A goal of Aging Futures is to prevent isolation among the senior population. As Dr. Berkowitz said, "If you develop relationships now, people are in place for you when you need them. They are the friends who take you to the pharmacy when you are sick. They help you feel independent and vital as you age."



Special thanks to Volunteer Administrators of the Southern Tier who helped answer the phones: Ed Blaine, Sue Bock, Carol Gorton, Amy Howard, Joanne Kays, Arlene Koniuto, Gloria McAndrew, Kitty Morrow, Deb Stewart, Rosemary West, Mary Beth Willis; also Marie Heger from Old Country Buffet; and Doris DiRado, Lucy Dirlam, Rita Fluharty, Rosemary Mahon, Dana Rose, and Robby Smolinsky, partners of Aging Futures.

Elder-Friendly Communities Continued from Page 1

- enables people to live comfortably and safely at home
- Caregivers are mobilized to complement the formal service system

Promotes Social and Civic Engagement

- Residents maintain connections with friends and neighbors
- Civic, cultural, religious and recreational activities include older residents
- Opportunities for volunteer work are available
- Community residents help and trust each other
- Appropriate work is available to those who want it.

There are 33 indicators that guide our community to think and plan for the elder boom and to assess how well we are meeting the needs and nurturing the aspirations of older residents. One website is www.elderfriendly.com, another link is www.rwjf.org/portfolios/resources/grantsreport.jsp then click on vulnerable populations > Grant Results > July 2004 > "Project Identifies 33..."

Joan, but the fibromyalgia tires her easily, causing worry that she may miss the connection. She has heard that she is eligible for homecare, but because she feels well most days cannot access temporary services.

Joan lives on the second floor and there are days when she is not well enough to get out. She stopped going to church when she gave up her car. She hates to let down the agency where she enjoys volunteering.

Joan's experiences may be unfamiliar to those of us who maintain jobs, save a little with each paycheck, heed the call to exercise often, and can count on children and other family. Not everyone is as lucky as we (or as Joan).

Partnership Makes Formal Step with Guidelines

If you Google “community partnerships” all sorts of information on making coalitions work is at your finger tips. Successful partnerships have certain characteristics in common. Successful partnerships clearly communicate how the organization works and offer a variety of opportunities for involvement.

The Aging Futures Partnership has thrived on an informal culture for many years. It has always been open, and organizations and people could participate as they were able, when they were able.

Soon the Partnership will adopt *Operating Guidelines*, thanks in large part to our growth over the past three years. The new guidelines are intended to honor our informal culture and clarify how the Partnership works. They will be our outline as we orient new participants, new funders and seniors about how we operate and who is involved.

Partners will be able to choose from two different levels of participation:

Collaborating Partners will provide input on priorities, plans, activities and positions of Aging Futures. It is assumed those partners will serve as active participants on one or more workgroup. Collaborating partners will have one vote on issues requiring voting.

Supporting Partners will provide input on priorities, plans, activities and positions of Aging Futures. Supporting partners will participate to the extent they are able but they will not be expected to serve on committees or regularly attend Partnership meetings. They will not have a vote on Partnership decisions.

The Partnership will continue to ask local coalitions such as the *Home Care Coalition* and the *Long Term Care Administrators* to appoint a representative to the Partnership. Each coalition will have one vote.

Our vision of promoting vital aging can best be accomplished by offering all community members opportunities for participation. Think about your level of involvement. Soon we will be asking for your commitment in writing, an essential characteristic of community partnerships, funder interest and Aging Futures sustainability.

A Partner's Perspective

“Being involved in Aging Futures saves my organization valuable resources. I use the data of community needs information collected and compiled by Aging Futures instead of having to purchase that service. AF helps our community save resources.”

Tony Fiala, The SEPP Group

Moving to a more formal arrangement acknowledges our growth and complexity as a Partnership. It also directs us toward sustainability.

SMILE Program Underway

It is estimated that at least two million seniors suffer from depression, a major public health problem which often goes unreported, undiagnosed, and untreated.

Aging Futures has responded to this problem in our community with the Senior Mood Improvement through Lifestyle and Education (SMILE) program. It focuses on early detection of depression in elders through screening, education, and a six visit cognitive-behavioral counseling intervention. Elizabeth Strong and Rick Spencer with The Family and Children's Society will be conducting screenings at designated Senior Housing Centers, beginning in June 2006.

Following completion of the program, evaluation will be conducted to determine its success. Depression continues to be a significant problem for seniors in our community and we anticipate that the SMILE program will be one of many initiatives that will help meet these needs.

AF Welcomes Consultant to its Staff



Aging Futures welcomes Dr. Kathleen Colling, Aging Services Coordinator, who joined the staff in January. Kathy will spearhead coordination of the SMILE Program (Senior Mood Improvement through Lifestyle and Education), an activity of the Chronic Disease Management Workgroup.

Kathy is a registered nurse with Baccalaureate and Masters degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University. She completed her PhD at Cornell University and taught at the Decker School of Nursing at Binghamton University for over 23 years. She relocated to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in order to pursue research experience as a Post Doctoral Fellow and Research Scientist.

Kathy is enthusiastic about being back in the community again and looks forward to working with various workgroups including Evaluation and Data and Social Connections. She can be reached at (607) 778-6120.

Long Term Care Planning is Newest Section in the 4th Elder Services Guide

Congratulations to Action for Older Persons, Inc., for the continued success of the *Broome County Elder Services Guide* (ESG). It is so useful to the community that they have just updated the information and reprinted more than 16,000 copies for Edition 4.

New in this edition is the "Long-Term Care Planning" category of services on page 44. Because long-term care services are on the minds of many people in our community, this category was added so that readers would know where to turn for guidance and support as they begin planning for and/or seeking out available services. Now, the ESG also includes a quick index of commonly requested long-term care services on the inside front cover, and Section 4: Long-Term Care has been expanded to better define long-term care options and to highlight hotline phone numbers and informational websites.

In addition, the *Broome County Elder Services Guide* is available on the web at www.broomeelderservices.org. This resource is especially useful to relatives who live out of town. The son or daughter of a Broome senior can go on-line and do some preliminary investigations about what is available for Mom or Dad without having to be here to get phone numbers and other information.

Service provider organizations represented in the ESG may request an initial quantity of up to 25 free Guides from AOP; these same organizations may request additional quantities of 25 Guides while supplies allow. Requests should be faxed on the "Elder Services Guide Order Form" to AOP at 722-1293. (To obtain an Order Request, call AOP at 722-1251.)

Impacts of the Stay Connected Phone Bank

Sixty (60) persons were chosen at random to receive a follow-up phone call about the packet that was mailed after the phone bank in January. As a result, five referrals were made to the Senior Resource Line. Seniors say they are trying new ideas to stay socially connected: volunteering, subscribing to *Senior News*, or attending a senior center.

Several postcard evaluations were returned to the office. This is what some of the responses were to the question about new activities they were attempting: "Call on friends and bake for them when I am able." "Check back with the Senior Citizens Centers." "Meet with new friends and hear what they do to keep busy."

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The White House Conference on Aging: Broome and the Nation Think Alike

The theme for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) was "The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action." It focused on the 78 million baby boomers that began to turn 60 on January 1, 2006. Some of the issues that concern Broome County are in the top 10 resolutions of the conference.

- Ensure that older Americans have transportation options to retain their mobility and independence.
- Support geriatric education and training for all healthcare professionals, paraprofessionals, health profession students and direct care workers.
- Improve recognition, assessment and treatment of mental illness and depression among older Americans.

To learn more look for the final report which is to be presented to the President and Congress by June 2006.

What's New on Our Website: www.agingfutures.org

- PowerPoint on Broome Senior Demographics
- 65 Ways to Stay Socially Connected
- Fact Sheet on Senior Depression
- AF Radio, TV and Print Ads
- Phone Bank Interviews

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