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Adult Services Practice Notes

Dedicated to providing information on excellent family-centered practice with adults and their families.

Collaborating to Build Communities for All Ages

Across North Carolina, organizations that serve older and disabled adults and their families are engaging with their communities to improve formal and informal long-term care and create *senior-friendly* places to live. One not-so-well-kept secret, of course, is that a community designed to be senior-friendly often is a nicer place to live for all its residents.

In this issue, we're going to hear from some people engaged in these planning processes and consider what you can do, as a professional and as an individual, to participate in one of these initiatives or develop something similar in your own community.

Senior-friendly Communities: Nash, Franklin, and Guilford Counties

Throughout North Carolina, senior centers provide a focal point for social contact, life-long learning, volunteer opportunities, and access to community services and supports. In fall 2004, the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) invited three senior centers to pilot a project to plan for senior-friendly communities. All of them are centers of excellence (certified under the division's voluntary self-evaluation process): Franklinton Senior Center in Franklinton, The NASH in Nashville, and the Roy B. Culler Senior Center in High Point. Each has selected a different area of focus from the model developed by the division (see the description at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/sfcomp.htm#A>), and we wanted to

Vision

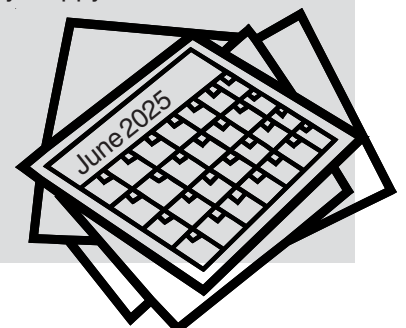
A senior-friendly community offers a wide range of social and economic opportunities and supports for all citizens, including seniors; values seniors' contributions to the community; promotes positive inter-generational relations; considers the needs and interests of seniors in physical and community planning; respects and supports seniors' desire and efforts to live independently; and acknowledging the primary role that families, friends, and neighbors play in the lives of older adults, enhances their capacity for caring.

—NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/aging/sfcmmain.htm>

Imagine!

It's 20 years from now (more or less, depending on your age) and you are an older adult. What are the top 5 things you need to stay healthy, happy, and connected to the world around you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Keep Imagining!

Pick one of the five things you wrote on the first page.

(Which one?) _____

What do you personally have to do right now for this thing to be true in 2025?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

learn how they had recruited and worked with community partners and what they could share with other organizations and communities about the process.

Patrick Woods, director of the Franklinton Center, said “The center had already collaborated with the town’s police department on an earlier project, and the newly elected mayor, Jenny Edwards, also had convened a forum to discuss senior safety, so continuing the work in this area seemed the logical choice.” As part of the community safety component of the model and understanding that many seniors are concerned with fraud and exploitation, the task force narrowed its focus to telemarketers and door-to-door scams.

Although the project focuses on residents of Franklinton, the task force includes an impressive array of representatives from the state divisions most concerned (Aging and Adult Services, Insurance, the Attorney General’s fraud task force), the Area Agency on Aging, and the county, together with local seniors and town officials. Woods remarked that one of the surprises of the process was the eager participation of the state and county representatives.

Woods says the work for this phase of the community safety effort is nearly complete, though they are looking for funding for a fraud and scam telephone alert network. The local television station will participate in an alert system as well, and information will be distributed to seniors in town. The senior center has also developed a direct, low-cost solution to some of the problem by making a paper shredder available to participants.

“Senior-friendly businesses and community sensitivity tie in together in many ways,” says Jamie Wilson, director of the NASH, about the two areas of focus her community chose. “Many businesses already accommodate seniors and people with special needs, but they lack the exposure to make these efforts known. We are currently scheduling work sessions with our planning committee to define what a sensitive community and a senior-friendly business will look like, so we can develop training and certification guidelines. Once a usable plan is established, we can offer sensitivity training to the public and allow businesses to apply and receive certification for making the appropriate accommodations to be senior-friendly.”

And the benefit of engaging the community in this way? “A senior-friendly community will empower seniors to be more independent by not relying solely on aging service providers for their needs. Therefore, service providers can fo-

cus more of their attention on the needs of those who are more dependent. This initiative not only makes the community more accessible for older adults, but benefits all citizens by making day-to-day life easier.”

The Roy B. Culler Center’s director, Calvin Vaughn, explained why they chose cultural and social programs for their project: “Because our participants are so involved in arts—a strong theatre group, strong large chorus, many art classes, several very accomplished artists, and regular visits to cultural events. It was an area in which we could get a lot of support, buy-in, and early success, which will make it easier to tackle bigger and more complicated issues.”

The key to their success so far has been first involving High Point’s Visitors and Convention Bureau—perhaps an unusual partner, but one that provided an entrée to all the organizations in town connected with the arts. “I discussed the large number of older adults, the larger number of baby boomers, and how they could more positively affect cultural events—increased attendance, increased participation through volunteerism, and the possibility of increased revenue through gifting by seniors.

“One of the most challenging things for us has been to define what we mean by *senior friendly*, and express the concept. Do we even want to use the term *senior*? How do we avoid conveying the idea that seniors are all frail and needy, especially since we are targeting baby boomers and active seniors, as well as older adults who may need accommodation.”

Like The NASH, the Culler Center’s plan includes a certification process to recognize arts venues as senior friendly: that, among other things, they include seniors in their planning processes; pay attention to seniors in decisions about what to present, times, and costs; and increase opportunities for gifted and talented seniors to be more involved in the arts locally. Why was it helpful for the center and its participants to get involved in this project? “It helped us build stronger partnerships, develop opportunities for funding, and has increased community awareness of the large number of seniors (now and coming).”

And More . . .

How would your community (family, friends, social network, workplace, government) provide support?

1. (Family and friends)
2. (Social network)
3. (Workplace)
4. (Government)
5. (Other support?)

Community Planning for Long-term Care in Mecklenburg and New Hanover Counties

In 2003, the legislature called on the Department of Health and Human Services to “implement a communications and coordination initiative to support local coordination of long-term care” and charged DAAS and the Long-term Care Cabinet with providing written materials (one of them was the *Planning Basics Notebook*, included in the resources on the last page), training, and technical assistance to two volunteer pilot counties. Five sites submitted competitive proposals, and Mecklenburg (with the county DSS as lead agency) and New Hanover (with the county Department of Aging) were selected.

The Mecklenburg site team was already involved in a collaborative community planning process. Members of the DSS staff developed a series of reports on the status of seniors, guided by a team that included representatives of United Way of Central Carolinas, the Centralina Council of Governments—Area Agency on Aging, the DSS, and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Aging Coalition, a group that grew out of the Home and Community Care Block Grant planning committee and open to anyone in the community.

Their practical definition of long-term care comes close to the idea of liveable communities that support all their residents. In the first year of the project, they focused on older adults and developed goals in five areas: transportation; facilities and institutions; food and nutrition; in-home support services; and leisure, recreation, and socialization. The planning report, completed in May 2004, lists seven leading recommendations, the first of which was to “establish a multifunctional organization that will serve as a ‘focal point’ for the aging network’s strategic planning, information and assistance, care/case management, education and

One of the most notable accomplishments is how the strategic planning process inspired collaboration within the network of organizations serving older adults. Many of the usual barriers to collaboration ceased to exist, while new alliances formed, discussions grew more open and honest, and passion around issues affecting older adults and adults with disabilities flourished.

—Mecklenburg County, *Status of Seniors Initiative, Community Planning Report, page i.*

communication, and advocacy on issues affecting seniors.” The planning team has now moved to implementation. New Hanover County’s aging network has a history of effective collaboration among public, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations, but it had not worked with younger adults with disabilities and their advocates. Asking those who had served on the transportation board to identify others who might be interested in participating, New Hanover’s planning group worked to identify the common interests of both groups. Calling their initiative Building a Responsive Community (BARC), their first step was to educate one another about the issues they faced and how the service system addressed them. Using DAAS’s core service evaluation tools

And Still More . . .

What can you do now as a professional to see that community support is there?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What can your agency do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

as a springboard for discussion, five work groups studied the existence, adequacy, accessibility, efficiency, equity, and quality of home health, housing, in-home aide, mental health services, and transportation. In September 2004, they held a large community event to refine key issues. In March 2005 the group reported that “BARC is now in the process of solidifying a realistic long-term care plan for the elderly and disabled populations,” concentrating their efforts on advocacy/education for all service areas and housing and universal design. The transportation and housing work groups are collaborating to try to get commitments from developers to develop transportation options for residents of their new communities.

Other Planning Initiatives

Here are the ones we know about as this newsletter goes to press.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg DSS. <http://www.charmeck.org>

Use the site’s search function to locate the reports.

The Administration on Aging and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services have sponsored a project to develop resource centers for adults with disabilities (ADRCs) in Forsyth and Surry counties. See Forsyth’s website, <http://www.seniorservicesinc.org/ADRC/>; Surry will hold a community event at the end of June.

Region K (Kerr-Tar) is planning for senior-friendly communities through the Regional Aging Advisory Council, focusing on affordable health care and senior centers.

In Region M, walkability was the focus of a recent series of activities organized by the Fayetteville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (<http://www.fampo.org/>). City and county planners from Region M and neighboring Moore County also attended a meeting with the Mid-Carolina Area Agency on Aging and DAAS to consider the joint responsibility of individuals and communities for healthy aging through active living.

Scotland County has recently begun a planning process focused on aging by holding a community event.

In Wilson County nearly 200 residents attended an event on May 4 to assess how well the county planned with and for older adults.

Some Resources

- AARP. 2005. *A Report to the Nation on Liveable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging*. http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/beyond_50_communities.pdf
- . 2005. *Liveable Communities: An Evaluation Guide*. http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/d18311_communities.pdf
- . 2005. *Liveable Communities On-line Quiz*. <http://www.aarp.org/tools/quiz/>
- Administration on Aging. Mapping Your Future Your Way. http://www.aoa.gov/press/oam/May_2005/docs/MappingYourFuture_LowRes.pdf. A self-assessment tool for personal planning.
- NC Division of Aging and Adult Services. 2004. *Planning Basics Notebook*. On the web at <http://ssw.unc.edu/cares/planningbasics/index.htm>. This guide, developed for counties planning long-term care, covers many of the nuts-and-bolts issues of community planning and contains links to a wealth of resources on the web.
- U.S. Small Business Administration, Women's Business Center. Personal goal setting, <http://www.onlinewbc.gov/docs/starting/goals.html>. Although this site is designed for women who want to start small businesses, the advice on setting personal goals would apply to most people taking stock of their personal and professional lives.

Thanks to Judy Smith, Senior Center Program Specialist at DAAS, and Mary Anne Salmon, Aging Research Specialist at CARES, for joining the editorial board for this issue.

And Finally . . .

1. What are you going to do today, this week, this year to make a difference to your life 20 years from now?
2. How are you going to develop support from your family and social network?
3. How are you going to develop support at work?
4. How are you going to work with your community?

**Visit the CARES web site at <http://ssw.unc.edu/cares/cares.htm>
for on-line copies of this newsletter, updated calendar of workshops,
links to background materials for events, and much more.**

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The aspen is perhaps the world's largest organism. Although some aspen forests cover acres and seem to be composed of individuals in all stages of life, they share a common root system.

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