

# Senior-friendly Communities Initiative

On March 1, 2006, directors from the three centers piloting the Senior Friendly Communities Initiative met in Raleigh to review and bring closure to the pilot year. This document reviews the initiative and reports on the final products from the pilots.

## Background

In Fall 2004 the Division of Aging and Adult Services invited three senior centers to pilot projects to plan for senior-friendly communities. The purposes of these pilots were to:

- enhance the community's "senior-friendliness" in a specific area
- explore on a small scale how senior centers might work in their communities to further the concept of senior-friendly communities
- determine possible roles for senior centers in promoting, marketing, and advocating for their community to become more senior friendly.

To qualify, senior centers must have demonstrated an interest in the senior-friendly communities initiative, had to be a state-certified Center of Excellence, and have a manager/director who was a graduate of the Ann Johnson Institute for Senior Center Management.

The senior centers chosen to pilot this initiative were Franklinton Senior Center in Franklin County; Nash County Senior Center (The NASH), in Nashville; and the Roy B. Culler Senior Center in High Point, Guilford County.

Once these senior centers were chosen, they were asked to:

- establish a senior-friendly community committee or use an existing advisory committee
- choose an area of focus from the "Areas of Interest and Concern" model listed in the Senior-friendly Communities brochure. Each pilot was asked to select a different area of focus, to test different aspects of the model.
- design and test a community evaluation process related to the "Six Dimensions of Community Evaluation," also listed in the brochure
- develop a plan based on the evaluation outcome and community involvement
- work with community partner to implement the plan.

The time frame for completion was November 2004 to November 2005.

The following outcomes were envisioned:

- development of pilot senior centers as role models for other centers in the state
- development of a statewide senior center model for a community evaluation process
- development of a Senior-Friendly Communities training tool for use by North Carolina senior centers
- opportunities for speaking at conferences and training events
- opportunities for increased community visibility and leadership for senior centers
- development of a track record to assist in gaining grants and other resources.

Here is a summary of what the centers reported at the meeting on March 1.

### **Franklinton Senior Center**

Patrick Woods, Director

- A senior-friendly task force was formed and comprised of representatives from state divisions (including Division of Aging and Adult Services, Insurance, and the Attorney General's fraud task force), the area agency on aging, county and town officials, and local seniors.
- A needs assessment questionnaire was conducted and evaluated.
- Based on the needs assessment outcome, the pilot's objectives were determined by local needs and focused on the areas of safety and exploitation.
- The following products were developed:
  - ◆ Community Scam Prevention Brochure
  - ◆ SCAM JAM workshop
  - ◆ Workers Referral Program
  - ◆ Fraud and scam information and brochures developed and placed in a rack in the senior center
  - ◆ Fraud alerts on local cable channel
  - ◆ Availability of a paper shredder for participants of the senior center to use.
- All of the products developed are adaptable for use in other communities.
- Funding for the project came from AARP
- Publicity for the program has been by word of mouth, local cable television, brochures, and through the senior center newsletter
- The outcomes have been:
  - ◆ Increased awareness by the community about safety and fraud issues
  - ◆ Increased awareness of the senior center

- ◆ The empowerment of the senior center staff as advocates, which has lead to more confidence in reporting information to authorities.
- The fraud and scam telephone alert network has not been developed, but Patrick is looking into low-cost ways of implementing it.
- Future plans are to assist other senior centers in their senior-friendly initiatives.
- The advisory group was assembled purposefully for this specific initiative and it no longer meets, but Patrick felt that the members would be available if needed. If he were to undertake this initiative again, he might seek a wider representation, to educate the community.

### **The Nash County Senior Center (The NASH)**

Jamie Wilson, Director, and Stacie Nelson, Director, Department of Aging

- The Senior-Friendly Action Team was formed and comprised of a large group of community members (60 people), including business owners, representatives from the chamber of commerce, local officials and departments, the area agency on aging, and the faith community, as well as some unusual community partners. They felt that having a group this large would allow them to educate a diverse group in the community.
- The project was based on an already-existing regional pilot whose objectives were to develop a tool to certify businesses as being senior friendly and create community sensitivity about facts and misconceptions about older adults through training.
- The town of Nashville was chosen as the pilot area.
- The following products were developed:
  - ◆ Senior-friendly logo
  - ◆ Certification tool for businesses
  - ◆ Ageism brochure
  - ◆ “Promotional products” such as pins, stickers, magnets, etc.
  - ◆ Training for volunteer certification teams.
- All the products are adaptable for each county in the region, and the Roy B. Culler Center in High Point adopted a version of the senior-friendly logo for their certification process.
- For the certification process, trained volunteers will go into businesses and use the certification tool for analysis. If the business becomes certified, it will receive a “senior-friendly kit” to assist it in being “senior-friendly” above and beyond the requirements of the certification evaluation. Periodic recertification will be required, but details have not been finalized.
- Both the tool and the training for volunteers were tested when the first round of volunteers were asked to rate the senior-friendliness of the senior center

- itself, which had several areas that could be improved. Not only did volunteers identify those areas, but they did not hesitate to point them out,
- Support money was provided by the region's area agency on aging.
  - Publicity for the project as been through the local newspaper, the "Spark a Logo" contest, and the senior center newsletter.
  - Rules for the "Spark a Logo" contest made clear that winning entries would be used to suggest logos, but that they would not necessarily be used as entered.
- This contest drew quite a number of entries, and the top three were awarded \$50 prizes. Entrants and winners spanned the generations.
- Plans include beginning to certify businesses in the Spring 2006, maintain the certification process, and provide supportive services to interested businesses throughout Nash County and not just the pilot area of Nashville (they have already had requests to consult with a nearby community and the library in Rocky Mount), and having the Senior-Friendly Action Team take on another area of interest.
- Jamie and Stacie identified the following challenges:
    - ♦ The development of the logo proved to be difficult.
    - ♦ Narrowing down the definition of community sensitivity and the distinction between the senior-friendly initiative and community sensitivity was a challenge.
    - ♦ Their original plan to develop a directory that outlined all the Nashville businesses and their senior-friendly services proved to be too large a task.

### **Roy B. Culler Senior Center, High Point, Guilford County**

Calvin Vaughn, Director

- Individuals were strategically picked by the senior center director to be a part of an active working committee.
- The project stemmed from an opportunity that presented itself when Calvin approached the High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau about funding for senior center activities.
- The senior center partnered with the Convention and Visitors' Bureau, the local arts council, the area agency on aging, and the Guilford County Aging Planning Committee
- The focus of the project was developing a tool to use in evaluating social and cultural venues specifically for certification as senior-friendly institutions.
  - ♦ The certification tool is patterned on the SCOPE tool for evaluating senior centers, and venues that gain certification must pass a certain proportion of the areas in the tool.
  - ♦ The certification would be reevaluated every 5 years

- The following products were developed:
  - ◆ Self-assessment certification tool
  - ◆ Senior-friendly logo
  - ◆ Brochure
  - ◆ Senior-friendly Certificate and Sticker
- All the products are adaptable to other locations
- Support money for the stickers and brochures came from the Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- Calvin has made use of regular radio broadcasts and the senior center's newsletter to publicize the program.
- The outcomes have been:
  - ◆ Increased awareness of the senior center
  - ◆ Highlighted the senior center as a leader within the arts and cultural community
  - ◆ Previous partnerships with the cultural community were strengthened
  - ◆ Increased awareness of the initiative and what "senior-friendly" means.
  - ◆ Three venues have been certified and four are looking at the tool (16 venues potentially could be certified).
- Plans include continuing to certify venues and maintaining the program.
- Calvin identified the following challenges:
  - ◆ Development of the logo
  - ◆ Defining what "senior friendly" means
  - ◆ Keeping focused on this single initiative.
- Calvin, too, said that gathering a larger group would have helped educate a larger segment of the community, possibly making it easier to move on to a new senior-friendly initiative.

For more information about these pilot projects please feel free to contact the following individuals:

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