

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL ON AGING

About the Council

The Wellesley Council on Aging (COA) founded in 1972, is a Town Department that serves residents 60 years or older and their families. The COA is funded through local taxes, state, federal, and local grants, and private contributions. The COA is composed of an eleven-member volunteer Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Selectmen. COA board members for fiscal year 2010 were: Linda Cohen (Chair), Mary Dummer (Vice Chair), Sr. Alice McCourt (Secretary), Mary Bowers, Stanley Hodges, Susan Kagan Lange, William Murphy, John Schuler, Eleanor Sullivan, Joellen Toussaint, and Kathleen Quirk. Sandra Budson and Sheila Nugent served as Associate Members. The COA's professional staff consists of a full-time Director of Senior Services, a full-time Health and Social Services Administrator (Outreach Worker), a full-time Program and Office Assistant, and a part-time Senior Activities Coordinator.

Council Services

The COA provides an abundance of information and referral; outreach services; and in home assessments. Services include subsidized transportation, a bi-monthly newsletter, financial assistance through the Almira N. Simons Fund, participation in the AARP Tax Counseling Program for Elders, SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders) health benefits counseling, and the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) Fuel Assistance program. Two staff members also serve as representatives of the Salvation Army, helping to provide assistance to residents age 18+ who are experiencing financial hardship. The Council on Aging, in conjunction with the Board of Assessor's, manages the Senior Work Corps program, where eligible senior citizens volunteer their time in a town department in exchange for a deduction on their property taxes.

The Volunteer Drivers Program

A proposal to pilot the development and implementation of a Volunteer Drivers Program (VDP) was presented to the Board of Selectmen in August 2010. In February 2011, The Fund for Wellesley awarded a \$10,000 grant to the COA, specifically to support the VDP for a period of six months. The goal of the program is to better meet the transportation needs of Wellesley senior citizens. During the six month pilot, the VDP accomplished the following: hired and trained a program coordinator; registered 99 passengers of whom 52 used the program; recruited and trained 30 volunteer drivers; conducted group meetings and database training sessions for volunteer drivers; provided 333 rides to 91 destinations. The total number of miles driven was 1,516 and involved 189 hours of driving. The Fund for Wellesley awarded a continuation grant to the COA, which will enable the VDP to continue through (at least) February 2012.

Programs July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

The Council on Aging is pleased to offer a variety of social, educational, recreational and cultural programs. There is particular emphasis on health and wellness activities and programs.

Many types of fitness programs were offered in 2011 such as: Weekly Walking Groups; Yoga; Balance and Flexibility; Better Bones (strengthening course); and Zumba Gold.

Classes included: Opera Appreciation; Music Appreciation; Fine Arts; Art For Fun (watercolor); Acrylic Painting; Healthy Cooking (in partnership with The Wellesley Health Department and The Wellesley Recreation Department); Television Production (in partnership with Wellesley Cable Access Channel); Language classes (German, Spanish, Chinese and Conversational French); Flower Arranging; Live Theater; Cribbage; Jewelry Design; Beginner's Bridge, and Safe Driving program.

The Council on Aging also offered a wide variety of seminars on various topics of interest. Topics included: "Be a strong advocate for yourself"; "Retirement strategies for living a long life"; "How Facebook can help you keep in touch"; "Answers about Arthritis"; "Papers in order, Plans in Place, Life at Ease"; "Adult Children and Parents – Start a Conversation"; and "Learn about Reverse Mortgages".

Several long-standing groups continue to meet at the Council on Aging: Bridge; Book Discussion Group; Community Service Bears (who meet weekly to make teddy bears for needy children); Bingo; Movies; Investment Club; Mah Jong; and individual computer tutoring. The Council on Aging offers day trips once per month. These trips are always very well attended and enjoyed.

We continue to enjoy ongoing partnerships with Babson College, Tenacre School, Dana Hall, Wellesley College, and the Wellesley Middle School to provide opportunities for intergenerational exchange. In March, the COA welcomed students and parent volunteers from St. John's, who hosted a special St. Patrick's Day Bingo. Other examples include: students assisting senior citizens with yard raking and/or snow shoveling services; community service projects; computer instruction or tutoring for senior citizens; concerts; and socials. We also value our younger volunteers who assist sporadically over the year. The Council on Aging received assistance with data entry; program set up and clean up; newsletter labeling; serving meals; carrying grocery bundles for seniors on group shopping day (with the COA bus) and other special projects. Volunteers from the Wellesley Hills Junior Women's Club (WHJWC) host our weekly Wii activity – a program that was made possible by a grant from the WHJWC in 2009.

New in 2011, the COA, along with the Needham COA, participated in a brand new program titled "Engineering for Humanity: Helping Elders Age in Place through Partnerships for Healthy Living." Students from Olin, Wellesley, and Babson Colleges met with elders in Wellesley and Needham. Students learned about their activities of daily life and collaborated with them to design and implement simple engineering solutions to everyday problems. The focus was on making adaptations to the elder's home to make it safer for independent living. Senior participants were invited to attend classes and events at Olin. The program was funded through a grant from the Metro West Community Health Care Foundation and will be offered again in the Spring of 2012.