

## **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 2012 were: Mary Dummer (Chair), Susan Kagan Lange (Vice Chair), Diane Lapon (Treasurer), Sr. Alice McCourt (Secretary), Mary Bowers, Sandra Budson, Linda Cohen, William Murphy, Kathleen Quirk, John Schuler, and Joellen Toussaint. Stanley Hodges, Sheila Nugent, Andrew Pernokas, Dianne Sullivan, Eleanor Sullivan and Harriet Warshaw 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, a part-time Senior Activities Coordinator, a part-time Volunteer Drivers Program Coordinator (funded by a grant from The Fund for Wellesley.) A new position titled Transportation Options Coordinator was added in the fall of 2011 and is funded by a one year (federal) grant from Springwell and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

### **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 COA, 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. In FY 2012, 19 senior citizens qualified for the program and 17 senior citizens participated in this program. Participants served as volunteers at The Health Department, Recreation Department, Natural Resources Commission, Recycling and Disposal Facility, and COA. A total of 1,319 hours were contributed by the senior volunteers and the total credit to participants was \$10,552.00.

### **Programs July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012**

The COA 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 such as: Weekly Walking Groups; Yoga; Balance and Flexibility; Better Bones (strengthening course); and Tai Chi. The COA offered programs in Opera Appreciation; Fine Arts (i.e. watercolor and acrylic painting); Language classes (German, Spanish, Chinese and Conversational French); and Cribbage. Brand new programs include Scrabble and board games; Chess; historical lectures, and Bridge Lessons. Several long-standing groups continue to meet at the COA: Bridge; Book Discussion Group; Community Service

Bears (who meet weekly to make teddy bears for needy children); Bingo; Movies; Investment Club; and Mah Jong; The COA offers day trips once per month. These trips are always very well attended and enjoyed.

The COA collaborated with a number of Town Departments and community organizations to offer special programs for seniors. Examples include: Flower Arranging and Healthy Cooking classes sponsored by Whole Foods; "Emergency Preparedness" sponsored by The Wellesley Health Department; "Learn About Town Government" sponsored by the Board of Selectmen; and "Learn to Protect Yourself and Others" sponsored by The Wellesley Health Department. The COA also offered a wide variety of seminars on various topics of interest. Topics included: "Fall Prevention"; "Estate & Long Term Care Planning"; "Circuit Breaker Tax Credit"; "A Visit from The Register of Deeds"; "Pet Therapy"; "Antique Appraisal" and "Know Your Housing Options."

During the spring months, the COA hosted / participated in several brand new exciting programs. Staff and seniors attended the "Senior Summit", hosted by Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrisey. This featured a number of presenters who spoke on many topics of interest such as Health and Nutrition and How to prevent financial exploitation and Identity Theft. In May, The COA our first evening event - "An Evening with the Dixie Diehards". The Dixie Diehards jazz band entertained 75 guests with tunes from the roaring 20's. Whole Foods graciously donated refreshments for this event. The COA looks forward to sponsoring future evening and weekend events, with the hope of drawing in new participants. Another memorable event was the Senior Citizen Day at Wellesley High School on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Approximately 150 senior citizens were invited to tour the new Wellesley High School and meet staff and students. They learned all about the WHS project and had opportunities to ask questions. The COA co-sponsored this event with The Fund for Wellesley, Wellesley COA, and North Hill.

We continue to enjoy ongoing partnerships with Babson College, Dana Hall, Wellesley College, and the Wellesley Middle School to provide opportunities for intergenerational exchange. We expanded our intergenerational programming this year to include a partnership with Hardy, Schofield and Upham Elementary Schools. A group of students and parent volunteers from Hardy came to the COA and were paired with senior citizens for a quiz show activity. They worked together to answer questions on topics ranging from history to geography to pop culture. Schofield School students hosted a "game day" with seniors. They enjoyed playing card games, chess and board games. A handful of seniors participated in an academic activity at the Upham School. They were interviewed by second grade students as part of the "New England Then and Now" unit. Students took turns asking questions about what life was like when the seniors were growing up. Other examples of intergenerational exchange include community service projects, concerts, socials, newsletter labeling, serving meals, carrying grocery bundles for seniors on group shopping day (with the COA bus), and students leading seminars and workshops on a variety of topics of interest to seniors (such as how to upload digital photos). 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.

Again this year, The Wellesley COA, along with the Needham COA, participated in a 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.

### **The Volunteer Drivers Program**

With continued funding from The Fund for Wellesley and private donations, the COA continued to offer transportation to senior citizens through The Volunteer Drivers Program (VDP). In FY 2012, 117 passengers requested rides and 30 volunteers provided rides. Passengers took 1,007 trips to 113 different destinations, which covered 5,354 miles. Volunteer drivers spent 505 hours driving. The program coordinator and 2 schedulers were paid through the grant from The Fund for Wellesley.

### **Transportation Options Program**

The COA received a \$9,000.00 Title III federal grant from The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and Springwell for a brand new program titled Transportation Options. The grant period is 10/1/2011-9/30/2012, with a possibility for a second year of funding. The goal of the project is to educate Wellesley seniors, their family members, caregivers and other interested individuals on the many transportation options available to seniors living in Wellesley. The ultimate goal is for individuals to be better educated about transportation options and to make well informed decisions on how to access the many transportation options for the places seniors need and want to get to. A part-time (8 hours/week) Transportation Options Coordinator was hired and conducted many information sessions at various locations throughout the year. There were 458 contacts made through this program from 11/1/2011-6/30/2012.