

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL ON AGING

About the Council

The Wellesley Council on Aging, founded in 1972, is a Town Department that serves residents 60 years or older and their families. The Council on Aging is funded through local taxes, state and federal grants, and private contributions. The Council on Aging is composed of an eleven-member volunteer Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Council on Aging board members for 2006-2007 were: Joellen Toussaint (Chair), Janet Beyer (Vice Chair), William Blount (Treasurer), Lorraine Tolman (Secretary), Linda Cohen, Mary Dummer, Stanley G. Hodges, Sr. Alice McCourt, William Murphy, Kathleen Quirk, and Eleanor Sullivan. The 2006-2007 Board also included one Associate Members –John Schuler.

The Council's professional staff consists of a full-time Director of Senior Services, a full-time Health and Social Services Administrator (Outreach Worker), and a part-time Senior Activities Coordinator. In 2006-2007, The Council on Aging experienced significant staffing changes. Gayle Barker was promoted to the position of Director of Senior Services in September 2006 and Laura Veligor was hired as the Health and Social Services Administrator in February 2007. The Council on Aging relies heavily on volunteers who assist with activities, lead programs, and participate as class instructors. The Council on Aging is very pleased with the success of the volunteer receptionist program, which was implemented in the spring of 2005. The Council on Aging has a team of 10 volunteers who each cover a half-day shift in the office and assist with answering phones, special projects, and program registration. The Council also has several volunteer instructors and group leaders.

Council Services

Council services include subsidized transportation, a bi-monthly newsletter, financial assistance through the 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 Fuel Assistance program. The Council on Aging also provides information and referral; outreach services; in-home assessments; Senior Room (drop-in) activities; weekday lunches (sponsored and managed by Springwell, Inc.); exercise programs; educational and recreational programs; social and cultural activities; day trips; and intergenerational programs. We are also a site for Wellesley residents age 18 and over to apply for limited financial assistance through the Salvation Army Voucher Program.

Programs July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006

Several long-standing groups meet at the Council on Aging: weekly Bridge (Beginner's and Advanced), weekly Investment Club, bi-weekly book discussion group, monthly meeting of the Wellesley Retirees, quarterly Triad meeting (partnership with seniors, law enforcement, and the Council on Aging to address safety issues for seniors), Community Service Bears (who meet weekly to make teddy bears for needy children), monthly BINGO, weekly Walking Group, monthly "Potpourri" (arts & crafts), weekly movies, monthly travel videos, and free individual computer tutoring.

Some day trips of note were: Boston Holly Trolley Tour; Essex River Trip; Trip to Newport, R.I. to see the Tall Ships; Heritage Plantation; MFA Art In Bloom; Summer Concert at Tanglewood and Trip to Block Island.

Exercise classes offered in Fiscal Year 2007 were: Walking Group (once per week), Yoga – advanced and beginner's- (once per week), Balance and Flexibility (twice per week), Line Dancing (once per week), Tai Chi (in conjunction with and held at the Recreation Department), weekly Strength Training and Fall Prevention (through a federal Title III Grant from Springwell, Inc.), and a new class called "NIA" which is a movement class, incorporating yoga, tai chi, dance and balance exercises.

Classes offered were: Computer Instruction, Opera Appreciation; Fine Arts; Creative Writing, Spanish Language Class, German class, Weight Watchers, and Safe Driving program.

The Council on Aging offered opportunities for intergenerational programming. We collaborated with the Wellesley Youth Hockey Association – youth raked leaves at the homes of several seniors in town. The Council on Aging also partnered with the Wellesley Middle School for the second year in honor of Community Service Day. We had an intergenerational pancake breakfast in May. Students set-up, served, socialized with the seniors, and cleaned up at the end.

There were also several health and wellness lectures offered such as: "Start Fishing For Health"; Presentation by Hospice of the Good Shepherd; Presentation by Lifeline; "Understanding Reiki Healing"; Understanding Medicaid – "Traps for the Unwary"; "How to Optimize Your Doctor's Appointments" – a presentation by Nursing Students at Regis College; "Listening Tour" with James Roosevelt, Jr. of Tufts Health Plan; Seminar on Hearing Loss; Presentation on Veteran's Benefits; and several presentations by the S.H.I.N.E. Volunteer on changes with Medicare and prescription drug coverage.

Lastly, the Council on Aging has been very involved this past year with the "Senior Study Committee" formed by the Board of Selectmen. The committee's mission is to evaluate how the Town of Wellesley can best provide educational, recreational, social and support services to residents over the age of 60. A survey was mailed to Wellesley residents born 1950 and earlier (age 57+). The Council on Aging Department assisted with survey development, assembly, and distribution. The committee was delighted with the response rate of approximately 21% - more than 1,300 survey responses. Many town departments and volunteers assisted with the data entry and the DPW assisted in developing a template for the data and running an analysis of the surveys. Understanding the interests and ideas of the residents at large will greatly assist the Council on Aging with program and service planning.