

## **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 2008-2009 were: Linda Cohen (Chair), Eleanor Sullivan (Vice Chair), William Blount (Treasurer), Mary Dummer (Secretary), Janet Beyer, Stanley G. Hodges, Sr. Alice McCourt, William Murphy, John Schuler, Kathleen Quirk, Joellen Toussaint. The Board also includes two Associate Members – Mary Bowers and Lois Dickinson. The Council'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.

### **Senior Center**

On April 6, 2009, Article 20, motion 2 was approved by a two thirds majority at the Annual Town Meeting. An appropriation of \$600,000 was awarded for a detailed design and construction documents for the development of a free-standing Senior Center. Leading up to Town Meeting, The Council on Aging staff and the Board of Directors had continued collaboration with the Senior Study Committee to expand advocacy for the senior center. The outpouring of support from members of the community – both seniors and non-seniors alike was impressive. The Town has hired William A. Sterling, of Sterling Associates Incorporated as the lead architect on this project and Lee Keller of KVA Associates as the project manager. A Senior Center Planning Committee has formed and is chaired by Terri Tsagaris, member of the Board of Selectmen. The Committee will meet regularly to move this project forward. The Senior Center is expected to be on the agenda of the 2010 Spring Town Meeting, at which time full funding for the Senior Center will be sought.

### **Council Services**

The Council on Aging provides an abundance of information and referral; outreach services; and in home assessments. Our 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, 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 February 2009, the Council on Aging took over the management of the congregate dining site, where weekday lunches (sponsored by Springwell, Inc.) are available to seniors. To date, the Council on Aging has recruited a total of 14 volunteers who are trained and certified to serve meals. Additionally, The Council on Aging is a site for Wellesley residents age 18 and over to apply for limited financial assistance through the Salvation Army Voucher Program.

### **Programs July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009**

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 2009 such as: Weekly Walking Group; Yoga – advanced and beginner's; Balance and Flexibility; Better Bones (strengthening course); Tai Chi; Senior/Healing Yoga; and Chair Yoga.

Classes included: Opera Appreciation; Fine Arts; Art For Fun (watercolor); Creative Writing, Cooking for One or Two; Language classes (Spanish and German), Healthy Eating for Successful Living (nutrition education for seniors); Jewelry Design; Beginner's Bridge, and Safe Driving program.

A wide range of educational presentations were given over the course of the year. Topics included: "Peace of Mind" Elder Care Meditation Program; "Over The Counter Medication"; "What Does It Mean? – TV is Switching to Digital"; "Managing Your Credit Card Debt"; "Recognize the Beauty of Your Being"; "Taking Care of Yourself and Others"; "Flu Facts"; "Tips To Beat The High Cost of Grocery Shopping"; "Protecting Your Assets"; "Estate Planning"; "Disposing of Unwanted Medications"; "Retirement Income Security"; "Rightsizing Your Life: Move on with Confidence"; "In Control – crash prevention class"; "Options on How to Keep Seniors at Home"; "Lyme Disease – Signs, Symptoms and Treatment"; "Jump Start Your Day with Breakfast"; "Transition Points – Lifestyle Changes"; and "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; Luggage-Free Travel; Mah Jongg; and individual computer tutoring.

The Council on Aging offers monthly day trips, which included: trip to Nantucket; summer concert at Tanglewood; visit to the Institute of Contemporary Art; Tri-State Fall Foliage Tour; "Bright Nights" at Forest Park; Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; Trip to Rockport and Ipswich; and Trip to Lake Winnepesaukee.

Intergenerational programs are coordinated throughout the year. We have enjoyed continued collaboration with the Wellesley Youth Commission, Babson College, Tenacre School, Dana Hall, and the Wellesley Middle School to provide opportunities for intergenerational exchange. Examples have included: 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; and other special projects. Six graduate students enrolled in the "Media Strategies" course of the Tufts-Emerson Health Communications Program chose the Wellesley Senior Center project as their area of focus for their class. They worked with the Council on Aging and the Senior Study Committee in the preparation of Town Meeting.

The Wellesley Council on Aging recognized more than 130 volunteers at a Volunteer Appreciation event held in April. In FY '09, approximately 5,600 volunteer hours were provided to the Council on Aging. Expanding our volunteer services program is going to be a priority of the Council on Aging in the coming year.