

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 fiscal year 2010 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. Mary Bowers served as an Associate Member. 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. A grant from the Fund for Wellesley was awarded to the Council on Aging in October 2009 for the purpose of expanding the volunteer program at the Council on Aging. These grant funds enabled the Council on Aging to hire a part-time Volunteer Coordinator who joined the department in January 2010. The position will be funded by the grant through December 2010.

Senior Center

A Town Development Review Team (TDRT), facilitated by Terri Tsagaris of the Board of Selectmen, met regularly in 2010 for the purpose of moving the Senior Center project forward. This included an extensive parking and traffic study on Washington Street – particularly the area of the former American Legion Site, as this is a proposed site for a stand-alone senior center. The TDRT continued benchmarking with other communities, paying particular attention to parking and traffic as well as the transportation available to seniors in those communities. The design plans for a proposed stand alone senior center at this site also progressed. Although there continues to be much support for a stand-alone senior center in Wellesley, other options are also being explored, such as the expansion of dedicated space for the Council on Aging at the present site – The Wellesley Community Center. The Council on Aging will work with the Board of Selectmen in the year ahead to continue the exploration and consideration of this, and perhaps other options. The Board of Selectmen unanimously supports the need for more adequate space for the Council on Aging offices, programs, and services.

Council Services

The Council on Aging 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 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. 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 Program

Thanks to the generous support of the Fund for Wellesley, The volunteer program at the Council on Aging has seen significant growth in FY 2010. A proposal to pilot the development and implementation of a Volunteer Drivers Program was presented to the Board of Selectmen in August 2010. The goal of the pilot is to meet the unmet transportation needs of Wellesley's senior population and is expected to run from January 1, 2011 through April 30, 2011. This will include development of a dispatch protocol, recruitment/training of eight to ten volunteer drivers, creation of a Safe Driver Handbook, recruitment of a passenger pool, and conclude with an assessment of viability and associated costs.

Programs July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

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 2010 such as: Weekly Walking Group; Yoga – advanced and beginner's; Balance and Flexibility; Better Bones (strengthening course); Tai Chi; Senior/Healing Yoga; Chair Yoga; and Zumba Gold.

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

The Council on Aging offered a wide variety of programs over the course of the year on various topics of interest. Topics included: "Identity Theft"; "Long Term Care Planning"; "Technology for Seniors"; "Learn to Skype"; "Healthy Skin"; "Jambo Africa"; "First Ladies of the Civil War"; "Music Appreciation: Swing Era"; "Walden Pond"; "Supercharge your Nutrition"; and "Age in Place Safely".

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 day trips once per month. These trips are always very well attended and enjoyed.

The Council on Aging is pleased to have continued collaboration with several Town Departments – specifically the Recreation Department, Health Department, the Youth Commission, The Veteran Services Department, and the Library. The Council on Aging enjoys co-sponsoring programs with these departments and has reached some "new" seniors by doing so. Intergenerational programs are coordinated throughout the year. 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. 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. 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.