

## **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 2007-2008 were: Janet Beyer (Chair), Eleanor Sullivan (Vice Chair), William Blount (Treasurer), Mary Dummer (Secretary), Linda Cohen, Stanley G. Hodges, Sr. Alice McCourt, William Murphy, Kathleen Quirk, Joellen Toussaint. The Board also included two Associate Members –John Schuler 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), and a part-time Senior Activities Coordinator. Over the last year, the Council on Aging staff and Board of Directors have been actively involved with the work of the Senior Study Committee, formed by the Board Of Selectmen, which is charged with assessing the needs, interests, and desires of Wellesley's older adults and determining if there is a need for a stand-alone senior center in Wellesley. The Council on Aging purchased a computer software program in November 2007 called "COATS" (Council on Aging Tracking System). Approximately 46 Councils on Aging / Senior Centers in the state are using "COATS". This software is primarily used to track program and service utilization. It also serves as a confidential database for clients involved in the Outreach Program. The software generates reports necessary for the Annual Grant submission to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. In FY '08, the Council on Aging requested an increase in staffing, which has been approved. The full time position of "Customer Service Specialist" was added to the personnel budget for the Council on Aging for FY '09. The primary responsibility of this position is to serve as the receptionist for the department and assist with a variety of administrative and clerical tasks.

### **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; weekday lunches (sponsored and managed by Springwell, Inc.); exercise programs; educational and recreational programs; social and cultural activities; monthly 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, 2006 – June 30, 2007**

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, weekly Mah Jongg; weekly poker classes; and free individual computer tutoring.

Some day trips of note were: Summer concert at Tanglewood; Trip to Block Island; Trip aboard the "Turkey Train" in NH; "Bright Nights" at Forest Park; The Bourne Scallop Festival; The Rhode Island Flower Show; and "Gardens of the Rich and Famous".

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), and Chair Yoga (once per week).

Classes offered were: Computer Instruction, Opera Appreciation; Fine Arts; Creative Writing, Language classes (Spanish and German), Weight Watchers, Learn to Play Texas Hold'Em, Beginner's Bridge, and Safe Driving program.

The Council on Aging offered many opportunities for intergenerational programming over the last year. We collaborated with the Wellesley Youth Commission to provide yard raking and snow shoveling services to seniors. Students from the Wellesley Middle School joined us for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Pancake Breakfast in honor of Community Service Day. Babson College students offered computer instruction sessions for seniors at the Babson Campus twice during the year. Approximately 40 students participated. Our Book Discussion group partnered with students from Mass Bay Community College for intergenerational book group meetings. Students and senior citizens read the same book(s) and got together for discussion sessions. Students from the Dana Hall School visited the Council on Aging in the spring and shared songs and dancing from their upcoming performance of "The Wizard of Oz". Children from "Kid Stuff" nursery school and the nursery school in the hills joined us for a special 3-D "Underwater World" program. There were also several Wellesley youth who volunteered sporadically over the year. They assisted with data entry; program set up and clean up; newsletter labeling; and other special projects.

In May, The Council on Aging offered a "Week of Wellness". Throughout the week, seniors were invited to participate in unique programs and workshops, free of charge. The week was very successful and included activities such as: "Extra Tour" at CVS, 188 Linden St., Wellesley; Presentation "Fun, Fitness and Fellowship" given by Amy Hicks, Senior Olympian; Presentation: "Taking Responsibility for Aging Well" by Janet Jankowiak, MD, board certified Neurologist; "Happy Birthday" – a play for elders, acted by elders – shared by author Ruth Harriet Jacobs, Ph.D. / Gerontologist; Demonstrations of Chair Yoga and Tai Chi; and presentations on Nutrition and Osteoporosis.

The Council on Aging has also had a successful partnership with the Wellesley Free Library and has offered a series of programs for seniors at the library – we call these opportunities "COA Day at the Library". Some of the workshop topics held over the last year included: General library services overview and "cool tools"; "Advanced Googling"; Researching Health Topics; Use the computer to find home repair and maintenance contractors; and "Good Reads" – a look at websites and other tools for

recommending books. We also co-sponsored an event titled "Organizing Gems for Seniors", a Professional Organizer shared tips for de-cluttering and getting organized.

The Wellesley Council on Aging recognized more than 100 volunteers at a Volunteer Appreciation event held in April. In FY '08, approximately 4,200 volunteer hours were provided to the Council on Aging.