

**Washtenaw County Blueprint for Aging
Year 2 Initiative Progress by Month
September 2007**

Senior Leadership Initiative

Senior Advocates of Washtenaw

The Senior Advocates held the final presentation in their educational series “How Will I Pay for Long-Term Care” on September 24 at the Ann Arbor Downtown Library; 60 people attended. The *Ann Arbor News* featured an announcement of the event with a picture on the front page of its “Connection” section. The program was well received, and the library was pleased with response to the event and with collaboration with the Blueprint for Aging/Senior Advocates of Washtenaw. The Senior Advocates also continued planning for the upcoming Senior Summit to be held November 16 at the Ypsilanti District Library.

Aging in Place Initiative

Friendly Aging Neighborhood Group FANG-Blueprint for Aging Pilot Projects

Community Volunteers – Each of the four neighborhoods continued efforts specific to their communities and explored new ways to build networks. Volunteers in one neighborhood continued to participate in a new community garden while two others began writing groups. FANG partners worked to develop topics for September’s Quarterly Update Meeting including a presentation devoted to working with people experiencing hearing loss (including an “unfair hearing test” for CVs) as well as background and pointers on starting writing groups and collecting “community stories” from elders as a way of preserving neighborhood history and connecting with seniors living in the neighborhood. Community Volunteers also updated the group on their efforts and plans. As part of the evaluation of the pilot each CV will be interviewed about experiences and lessons learned. These interviews will be taped and transcribed. In addition, each CV will complete a brief survey.

Transportation Voucher Pilot Project – The pilot project officially ended September 30th. Data is still being collected from formal and informal providers. Of the 55 participants who signed up, 42 used vouchers. Most people who did participate either used very few vouchers or all of them. FANG is considering the data collected and how it can be used to answer questions, draw conclusions and make recommendations. Focus groups and surveys with participants and providers will also be used to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of the model. The use of vouchers in a one-time capacity (in this case event-based) will be tested at the SAW Senior Summit in November. Results on all of the above will be reported at a later date.

Neighborhood Organization Support

Following an Osher Lifelong Learning mini-course conducted by Blueprint Pilot Projects Coordinator Rachel Dewees and partner Al Feldt in which models of neighborhood support for seniors were explored, participants asked for opportunities to share information and ideas on a regular basis. Interest came from community members currently organizing efforts in their neighborhoods and those interested in learning more. In response, the Blueprint is launching a series of brown bag lunches entitled “It Takes a Village...” to facilitate the conversation. Starting in November, the group will meet once a month at a standing location to be determined.

The Blueprint and the Housing Bureau for Seniors are exploring opportunities to observe and support neighborhoods interested in organizing to become more supportive for those wishing to age in place. In addition, neighborhood models in other parts of the state, country and beyond will be examined to increase understanding of best practices in different types of neighborhoods.

Technology Innovation Initiative

Dale Fitch published his research “Designing information systems around decision making” in M. Cortes and K.M. Rafter, *Non-Profits & Technology: Emerging Research for Usable Knowledge* (pp. 135-147). Chicago: Lyceum Books. Please ask staff if you would like a copy.

The E-Referral function is in place and ready for use. Partner agency staff including Neighborhood Senior Services, Washtenaw County, Catholic Social Services, Jewish Family Services and the Housing Bureau for Seniors provided input to create a responsive and meaningful tool. These partners were trained and given login names, passwords and encouragement to begin referring.

To date, participation has been extremely low and developers are unable to analyze or improve the system. **Partner agencies are encouraged to make the effort to use the system and normalize its use as a part of everyday functioning. In addition, partner agencies will be asked to broaden staff participation so that use is not dependent on the one individual trained.**

Blueprint staff will also seek out additional agencies or entities that can benefit from the system.

Foundation Building Initiative

Core Leadership Strategic Priority Setting Workshop

Core Leadership members gave input, made recommendations, and gave support for adjustments to the structure of the Blueprint and its action groups. Challenges are apparent due to Blueprint visibility in the community and numerous requests for support, endorsement and workgroup action. Overwhelming support was indicated for increased participation of Core Leadership Team members and the concept of embedding critical functions of the collaborative such as communications and evaluation. Further refinement of priorities will take place at the next Core Leadership Meeting in October.

Community Awareness and Education

BFA staff attends **Washtenaw County Senior Leaders**, September 27, to hear presentation on Health Interventions for Older Adults.

Blueprint for Aging was a co-sponsor of *What Are You Doing with the Rest of Your Life? Finding Fulfilling Work in Life's 2nd Half* hosted by **Jewish Family Services**. Project Manager Virginia Boyce presented information on Blueprint Initiatives.

Director Jill Kind presented a pre-conference intensive at the **Catholic Charities USA National Meeting** in Cincinnati on Components of a Successful Community Collaborative with co-presenter Sandy Markwood, CEO, National Area Agencies on Aging Association. Forty conference attendees selected this workshop – a demonstration of the relevance of the topic for other communities.

Staffing

Two UM Master of Social Work Students will intern with the Blueprint.