

**Washtenaw County Blueprint for Aging
Year 2 Initiative Progress
Winter (October, November, December) 2007**

Senior Leadership Initiative

Senior Advocates of Washtenaw

The Blueprint for Aging and the Senior Advocates of Washtenaw hosted the second annual Senior Summit on Friday, November 16, from 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at the Ypsilanti District Library, 5577 Whittaker Rd. Approximately 70 Washtenaw County seniors attended this day devoted to senior issues that included discussions with legislators, their representatives, and other older adults. Eighteen legislators and guests including State representatives Pam Byrnes, Rebekah Warren, and Alma Wheeler Smith attended. Federal legislators John Dingell, Carl Levin, and Debbie Stabenow attended or sent a representative from their offices. The event included time for state and federal legislators to address attendees, but also gave an opportunity for seniors to ask questions of their representatives and to discuss the issues they care about most with other seniors. Attendees also learned ways to get involved in public policy. This year's Senior Summit was a part of the Housing Bureau for Seniors Aging in Place Conference. Members of the Senior Advocates of Washtenaw came to educate themselves and other seniors on what legislators can do to benefit older adults.

Sponsored by the Blueprint for Aging since November 2005, the Senior Advocates of Washtenaw has now become an independent community organization, able to do lobbying as well as advocacy. Area Agency on Aging 1-B will contribute support through their senior advocacy initiative. The Blueprint for Aging will consider future requests for support as well.

Aging in Place Initiative

Elder Friendly Community

The Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging has approved the Blueprint for Aging's Elder Friendly Assessment of Washtenaw County. Dan Dozema will send a letter of congratulations in early January.

Blueprint for Aging Pilot Projects

Community Volunteers:

The third Quarterly Update Meeting of the Community Volunteers took place in late September. Information gained from trainers (on the topics of writing groups and hearing loss) as well as ideas generated by open discussion among participants fueled efforts in the fall and early winter. These efforts included bringing in speakers in one neighborhood and starting writing groups in two neighborhoods. CVs continued to be available to their neighborhoods as a resource with few requests for information or referral.

Each Community Volunteer completed a brief questionnaire and in-depth interview with an Eastern Michigan University student in the gerontology program. These interviews were transcribed and themes highlighted.

What was once known as FANG (Friendly Aging Neighborhoods Group) divided its members with some joining the Pilot Projects Work Group and some joining the Village Models Work Group. The

Pilot Projects group devoted the latter part of 2007 to looking closely at feedback from CVs and making recommendations as the pilot drew to a close.

Transportation Voucher Pilot Project:

The Transportation Voucher Pilot closed at the end of September. Data continued to be entered into the database and results tabulated during the fall and early winter. A convenience sample of participants completed a brief phone interview. The Pilot Projects Work Group reviewed evaluative information and discussed potential future directions/projects related to findings.

Neighborhood Organization Support

The Blueprint for Aging intern, Emily Farber, has been developing a series of community discussions, named “It Takes a Village...”. The Village Model, founded in Beacon Hill, MA employs an innovative approach to aging in place. The Blueprint hosted a community brownbag on November 7, at Turner Senior Resource Center. Sixteen community members attended and received resource materials including general information, several national examples, and a list of further resources. “It Takes a Village...” brownbag series continued on December 5, at then Arbor Community Center with 14 community members attending. The discussion focused on how to form “Villages” in Washtenaw County neighborhoods.

Currently there are two “Villages” emerging in Washtenaw County; the Lohr Road Village and the Dexter-Miller Co-op. Emily is working closely with these neighborhood residents to form and develop appropriate Village models. Feedback from both discussions has been very positive. Community members provided suggestions for future brown bag topics. Blueprint will host a third community brown bag on the Village model in early February. The BFA Core Leadership has chosen Village Model development as a strategic priority and has formed a Village Model Action Workgroup.

Technology Innovation Initiative

The concept of an interactive volunteer database was developed with our technical consultant. This system would advertise more immediate volunteer opportunities to support older adult programs and services. It would additionally allow volunteers to enroll and document hours on line. Most significantly, the system would ask agencies to “share” volunteers throughout the older adult service system. A prototype has been developed that has been indorsed by the Volunteer Systems Workgroup.

The Technology Workgroup is working toward solutions to the loss of our technical consultant, Larry Cohn. Non Profit Enterprise at Work was approached to provide database development and support. The plan involves interested entities like the Blueprint, AAACF and other agencies that utilize Quickbase to provide support for a central technical support system. County staff participated to consider a role to provide or to receive support.

Foundation Building Initiative

Core Leadership Team Meetings and Committees

Building upon the September Strategic Priority Setting workshop on September 21, Blueprint Core Leadership formed Action Workgroups corresponding to set priorities, to be co-chaired by CLT members and BFA staff. Workgroups include: Pilot Projects, Village Model, Senior and Community Centers, Volunteer Systems Change, Technology, Fund Development, Senior Data, and BFA Executive Committee. December Core Leadership time was used for individual workgroup meetings that clarified Workgroup Charters and first action steps. Full Core Leadership meetings and action workgroups will meet on alternate months, with workgroup reports at each Core Leadership meeting.

Community Awareness, Education and Events

From March 7-March 28th, at the University of Michigan's Slusser Gallery, the Blueprint for Aging will host *Aging with Attitude*, an all-ages, multi-medium art exhibit featuring art that challenges and expands perceptions of aging. This exhibit will serve as an exciting way for members of the general public who have not yet participated in the Blueprint to "enter" the project. As part of the Blueprint's mission to get the community thinking about and preparing the systems changes needed for healthy, independent, and honored aging for all, *Aging with Attitude* seeks to initiate conversations. Through a diverse set of creative representations, the exhibit will begin the work of expanding our collective response towards the aging process, something that will help make the systems changes developed by the sustainable in the long run.

Thus far, seventeen local artists have submitted exhibition entries. Most of these submissions include multiple artworks, in a variety of media. A panel of three (Bill Burgard—University of Michigan School of Art and Design, Ellen Wilt—Professor Emeritus, Eastern Michigan University, and Jill Kind) will select the pieces that make it into the exhibition. (They will base this selection on artistic merit and the goal of exhibiting a diversity of ways to address aging.)

Meanwhile, nine national artists who focus their work on aging issues have been invited to exhibit in the show. The above-mentioned panel will choose which works from this group fit best with the show's concept and design. Three elementary school classrooms are also working with their art teachers to produce drawings for the show, under the heading, "Me, When I am Old."

Next on the agenda are publicity work, in conjunction with the School of Art and Design's publicist, and physical preparations for installation of the exhibit on March 3.

BFA Collaborative Efforts and Initiatives

- Housing Bureau for Seniors—a forum for delivery of four *Money Follows the Person* informational community presentation to fulfill grant requirements through Senior Advocates of Washtenaw
- Housing Bureau for Seniors—Blueprint sponsorship of the 2007 Aging in Place conference, providing Blueprint partners Glacier Hills, University of Michigan Turner Senior Resource Center, Washtenaw County Veterans Affairs, Senior Advocates of Washtenaw, and The Oaks, an adult day program sponsored by Catholic Social Services, presentation space, advertising, and refreshments for attendees.
- Oakland County Catholic organization—presentation and workshop to help CSS of Oakland County begin priorities and strategies for a community collaborative to deal with senior issues and services

- Jewish Family Services—BFA Fiduciary, Catholic Social Services, sponsorship and Blueprint presentation at community workshop—What Are You Doing with the Rest of Your Life? Finding Fulfilling Work in Life's 2nd Half.
- Washtenaw Area Transportation Study—letter of support and commitment to provide vouchers and sensitivity training in grant proposal to National Center on Senior Transportation. Inclusion of a voucher project as an integral part of this grant was to strengthen proposal
- Senior Advocates of Washtenaw—Blueprint coordinates space in the Senior Health Building for monthly SAW committee meetings

Grant Management

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Community Partnerships for Older Adults annual national conference in Tucson- attending Phil D'Anieri, Jill Kind, and Virginia Boyce.
- Site visit from Mathematica, Robert Wood Johnson's evaluation consultant. Nine Core Leadership Team and community members participated in interviews.
- Evaluation Consultant, Sue Ann Savas, participated in telephone conference regarding Blueprint evaluation process.

Staffing

The Blueprint for Aging welcomes, N. Renuka Uthappa, as Blueprint for Aging Community Leadership Coordinator. UM MSW intern, Emily Farber continues with the Blueprint for a second semester.