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## **BLUEPRINT FOR AGING RECEIVES GRANT TO IMPROVE LOCAL SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS**

**The Blueprint for Aging project will improve long term care and supportive services**

**Ann Arbor, Michigan** – Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County on behalf of the Blueprint for Aging was awarded a \$750,000 grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve long term care and supportive services for at risk older adults in Washtenaw County. The four-year grant was awarded through the Foundation’s *Community Partnerships for Older Adults* (CPFOA) program, a national initiative created to foster community partnerships that will improve long term care and supportive services systems to meet the current and future needs of older adults.

Blueprint for Aging was one of eight projects across the country awarded funding. Its partner organizations include the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, Washtenaw County, Turner Geriatric Services, University of Michigan School of Social Work, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Eastern Michigan University, Neighborhood Senior Services, Lighthouse Technologies, HelpSource, the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, Washtenaw United Way and many other service providers from the non-profit and profit sector. Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County was awarded the grant in continuation of its leadership role and as the project’s fiduciary.

“Washtenaw County has seen the future and it is very ‘grey’. An exceptionally high rate of growth in numbers of older adults will severely strain existing programs and service,” says Jill Kind, Blueprint for Aging Project Director. “This core funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation gives Washtenaw County the means to respond progressively and compassionately to the needs of those most vulnerable elderly and to ensure the highest quality of life for a new and massive demographic of older adult residents.

The past 18 months of planning has demonstrated the enormous equity of interest, passion, and competence in our community: now we can put it to work.”

This initiative is consistent with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s longstanding commitment to support communities in which older adults can remain in their homes and neighborhoods and continue to live full, independent lives. The project will provide a structure for:

- Bringing greater visibility to the priorities, concerns, and experiences of seniors;
- Providing seniors with meaningful ways to affect decisions about community issues that ultimately impact their lives;
- Developing improved technology to streamline service delivery;
- Testing innovative pilot programs in caregiving support, transportation and improved access to needed help;
- Building a community that is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the county’s rapidly growing older adult population.

“There is no one-size-fits-all program that can adequately meet the diverse needs of older adults. Each of the partnerships selected understands that, and they are generating new approaches that address the unique long term care needs of older adults in their communities,” said Jane Isaacs Lowe, Ph.D., RWJF senior program officer.

The CPFOA projects focus on two groups of older Americans: those 60 years of age or older who are at increased risk of disability because of poverty, race or ethnicity, chronic illness, or advanced age; and older adults with physical or cognitive impairments who require long term care and supportive services.

“The Blueprint for Aging has realized that it takes more than a single agency or organization working alone to improve the long term care and supportive services system. The Blueprint for Aging is ‘pushing the envelope’ to develop solutions that fit their unique circumstances and priorities,” said Elise J. Bolda, Ph.D., CPFOA national program director.

The Community Partnerships for Older Adults program is based at the University of Southern Maine’s Muskie School of Public Service. The Duke University Long Term Care Resources Program provides technical assistance for the program, under the direction of Beverly S. Patnaik. More information about the Community Partnerships for Older Adults program is available on the program’s Web site at: <http://cpfoa.org>

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