



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** January 21, 2004

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Washtenaw County - *The Blueprint for Aging*, a first-ever community partnership of consumers, advocates, and over 30 service providers in Washtenaw County, is being formed to develop plans that revamp the county's system of long term care and supportive services and that meet the current and future needs of at-risk older adults. A kickoff event is being held Friday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am at the Senior Health Building on the St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Campus and is open to the public. "Our community of elders is expanding twice as fast as any other age group in the county, and we are simply not prepared to meet the need," says Jill Kind, MSW, director of Older Adult Services at Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw. "The goal for the Blueprint is revolutionary in our society: to 'Honor Aging' by becoming a community where quality help is affordable and easy to find when needed."

This bold community effort will:

- Create advocacy groups to study, evaluate and take action on policy proposals affecting older adults
- Develop a "shared point of access" on the web that informs seniors, family members and human service personnel about care options and allows easy, quick communication
- Plan the best ways to use dollars to serve caregivers of the frail elderly
- Improve the way seniors and their families find and use help, through community ambassadors and programs on wheels

*The Blueprint* is made up of Catholic Social Services, the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, Area Agency on Aging 1-B, HelpSource, Neighborhood Senior Services, Washtenaw County, University of Michigan Health Center Geriatrics Center, Housing Bureau for Seniors, Lighthouse Technologies, Washtenaw County Human Services Collaborative Council and NonProfit Enterprise at Work and 30 other local non-profit, public, private and for-profit entities.

This partnership is being made possible in part through a \$150,000 development grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and its *Community Partnerships for Older Adults*

(CPOA) program. A national program, CPOA challenges partnerships to build on their experience, share and learn from other communities, and help shape state and federal policy. *The Blueprint* was one of eleven projects selected from a field of 486 applicants nationwide to receive the development grants.

Through these grants, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recognizes the critical importance of long-term planning to meet the burgeoning needs of older Americans. “There is no quick fix for improving the current long term care system,” says Jane Isaacs Lowe, Ph.D., senior program officer at the Foundation. “It takes the coordinated planning and effort of a whole community to change the way long term care is viewed and provided.” Furthermore, as a development grant recipient, the Blueprint will have the opportunity to compete for an additional four-year, \$750,000 implementation grant to actually create as well as sustain the activities described in their plans.

“A national renaissance of community involvement is underway to improve long term care and supportive services systems, and our grantees are at the forefront,” notes Elise J. Bolda, Robert Wood Johnson national program director. “They understand the importance of taking action, and that communities can develop the solutions to improve the lives of older adults.”

The CPOA 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.

Specifically, CPOA projects seek to:

- Educate the community that long term care begins at home and in the community with individuals and their families
- Work together with older adults to develop community-wide long term care solutions
- Build bridges between the long term care options that exist today and those of the future
- Learn locally from their community and share nationally with others to develop solutions for long term care and supportive services systems.

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 CPOA is available on the program's Web site at:

<http://partnershipsforolderadults.org>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost; to improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse - tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

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