

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL ON AGING

About the Council

The Wellesley Council on Aging (COA) was established in 1972 to comply with legislation for the purpose of coordinating and carrying out programs and services designed to meet the needs and objectives of the population age 60 and over. In 2015, the COA developed a Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP) spanning a 5 year period (2015-2020). As part of LRSP process, a new mission statement was developed and implemented: *The mission of the Wellesley Council on Aging is to serve as the primary resource for residents over the age of 60; to empower individuals to reach their goals; to offer comprehensive programs, services and assistance that optimize quality of life; and to enable meaningful connections and collaborations that inspire a spirit of community across the generations in our town.* The LRSP outlines the following goals: Increase participation in programs and services to reflect growing population; Enhance public relations capability to inform community and leaders about opportunities; Serve as a resource, advocate, and collaborative partner to the larger community; Advance safe, efficient, accessible, affordable modes of transportation; Provide a welcoming, inclusive, secure, well-designed gathering place; Strengthen financial strategies and practices; Foster efficiency in governance and administration; Utilize state-of-the art record keeping, assessment systems, and technologies; Employ and promote healthy and environmentally sound practices; and Apply for National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) accreditation. The COA Board of Directors, in conjunction with the Director of Senior Services, will select 3-4 of these goals to begin working on in FY 15.

The COA is funded through local taxes, state, federal, and local grants, and private contributions. The COA is composed of an eleven-member volunteer Board of Directors appointed by the Board of Selectmen. COA board members for fiscal year 2015 were: John Schuler (Chair), Sandra Budson (Vice Chair), Miguel Lessing (Treasurer), Shirley Quinn (Secretary), Mary Dummer, Susan Kagan Lange, Diane Lapon, Sr. Alice McCourt, William Murphy, Sheila Nugent, and Joellen Toussaint. Mary Bowers, Jean Boyle, Diane Campbell, Linda Cohen, John Cross, Lisa Heyison, Judith Keefe, Gerald Kelley, Joanne Kilsdonk, Penelope Lawrence, Dianne Sullivan, and Frederick Wright served as Associate Members. The COA's professional staff consists of a full-time Director of Senior Services, a full-time Health and Social Services Administrator (Outreach Worker), a full-time Program and Office Assistant, a full-time Senior Activities Coordinator, a part-time Volunteer Coordinator, a part-time Volunteer Drivers Program Coordinator, a part-time Transportation Coordinator, two part-time bus drivers, one on-call bus driver, and a part-time Activities Assistant.

Senior Transportation

FY 15 was a transformative year for the COA, particularly in the area of senior transportation. On July 1, 2014, the Town/COA discontinued the long standing contract with M&L Transit Systems (contract price of \$107,000 in FY 14) and developed a new model for senior bus service - an agreement between the Town of Wellesley and the Metrowest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) whereby the

MWRTA leases a handicap-accessible 12-passenger gasoline burning vehicle to the Town of Wellesley/Council on Aging for the purpose of senior citizen transportation. This arrangement provides better oversight, increased service flexibility, and decreased annual cost of approximately \$40,000 compared to the *original* FY 14 budget. The COA now employs two part-time bus drivers (18 hours/week per driver) and the Transportation Coordinator's hours were increased to 19 hours/week (from 8 hours/week in FY 14). The Coordinator is responsible for the management of the senior bus program, supervision of drivers, scheduling rides, dispatching, creating bus logs, referring passengers to alternative transportation options when necessary, and completing daily paperwork as well as statistical monthly and annual reports. In FY 15, the COA bus provided 4,312 one-way rides (an increase of 343 rides from FY 14) and 232 unduplicated riders used the service (an increase of 97 riders from FY 14). Of the 232 riders, 150 were new users in FY 15.

The COA continues to offer transportation through our Volunteer Drivers Program (VDP). In FY 15, the VDP provided 1,626 one-way rides (an increase of 60 rides from FY 14) and 117 unduplicated riders used the VDP (an increase of 26 riders from FY 14). A total of 42 volunteer drivers provided rides to 138 different destinations, driving 10,394 miles and giving 890 volunteer hours to the COA.

Outreach and Services

The COA provides an abundance of information and referral; outreach services; and in home assessments. In addition to our growing transportation program, the COA produces a bi-monthly newsletter, aids seniors with applying for financial assistance from a variety of sources, participates in the AARP Tax Counseling Program for Elders, SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders) health benefits counseling, and the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) Fuel Assistance program. Two staff members also serve as representatives of the Salvation Army, helping to provide assistance to residents age 18+ who are experiencing financial hardship. The COA, in conjunction with the Board of Assessor's, manages the Senior Work Corps program, where eligible senior citizens volunteer their time in a town department in exchange for a deduction on their property taxes. In FY 2015, 16 senior citizens qualified for the program and 14 senior citizens participated in this program. Participants served as volunteers at the Department of Public Works, Health Department, Recycling and Disposal Facility, Wellesley Free Library and Council on Aging. A total of 961.50 hours were contributed by the senior volunteers and the total credit to participants was \$6,488.00.

Programs July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

The COA promotes healthy aging and encourages the age 60 and over adults to stay active and engaged to the fullest extent possible in all areas of life. Many new programs were introduced and many new community partnerships were established. A wide variety of social, educational, recreational and cultural programs were offered. Total event occurrences for FY 15 = 761 (an increase of 148 over FY 14). Fitness programs included: Two weekly Walking Groups; Yoga; Balance and Flexibility; Better Bones (strengthening course); Tai Chi, Line Dancing, and two nine-hole golf tournaments at Nehoiden Golf Course in collaboration with Wellesley College. The

COA ran another successful Evening and Weekend Lecture Series in partnership with the Wellesley Free Library. This series featured six lectures given by a distinguished group of presenters who spoke on a wide range of topics. The series will continue for a fourth year in FY 16.

In November 2014, the COA transitioned to a new model for the senior lunch program whereby meals were catered by two local restaurants – La Riviera Gourmet and The Linden Store. 149 unduplicated individuals enjoyed meals at the COA (up 99 diners from the FY 14 count of 50 diners). The cost of the meal is \$4.00 per person. The program is subsidized by The Friends of the Wellesley Council on Aging (about 50% subsidy per diner). In FY 16, the COA hopes to attract even more restaurants to participate in this catered lunch model.