AGING AND WELLNESS

LIFELONG COMMUNITY LIVING

- Age-friendly communities encourage active aging and social well-being by optimizing access to services and supporting community activities that enhance quality of life for all residents.
- By 2040, one out of every five people in the United States will be over 65.
- You can make your community more age-friendly by establishing a committee to facilitate mobility and social participation in preparation for aging residents.

ACTION STEPS

Plan Your Committee

- Intergenerational programming supports the fight against ageism and promotes cross-generational socialization that benefits people of all ages.
- Building age-friendly communities requires community support.
- Community leaders, local government representatives and residents can provide insight into areas of improvement to focus program activities.
- The committee should discuss ways to ensure safe and accessible public transportation, affordable housing, safe outdoor spaces, quality health services and sufficient community engagement through volunteer opportunities and other social activities.

Survey Residents

- Conduct a baseline assessment among older residents on how age-friendly they think your community is, and how it can improve. Survey questions can ask residents if they would rate your community as an age-friendly place, how important it is for residents to remain in their community as they age or how likely it is for them to relocate to a different community upon retirement.
- AARP provides **surveys** to facilitate the assessment process for age-friendly communities.
- Survey topics can include housing, transportation, health and wellness, social participation or civic engagement.

Make a Plan

- Develop an Action Plan based on the findings from your baseline assessment. The Action Plan should include an overall goal, action steps, activities to achieve set action steps, a schedule of activities, a list of needed resources and evaluation methods to measure success.
- Refer to the **Princeton Age-Friendly Community Action Plan** as a model to create your action plan.
- Partner with **New Jersey Travel Independence Program** to provide older residents of your community with the information they need to confidently use public transportation and increase their independence.
- Create a resource directory of appropriate services and resources to distribute to the community, especially seniors.
- Work with your municipality's Department of Public Works to advocate for safe access for all roadway users and pedestrians. Refer to **New Jerseys Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center's Complete Streets Program** for an example.

Evaluate Your Impact

- Evaluation is an important process that allows your community to identify areas of improvement and helps define the impact of your programming.
- Include evaluation methods in your action plan.
- Administer pre- and post-implementation surveys to assess progress on your program beyond your action plan.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD!

Here are just a few examples of communities that are aging well!

- **Age-Friendly Englewood** hosted a Housing Options Conference for residents over 65 to promote local housing services and assistance to apply for benefits. Seniors were educated on tax freezes and tax relief by a local tax assessor.
- **Age-Friendly Teaneck** partnered with Teaneck International Film Festival to host a contest encouraging high school filmmakers using smartphones to interview older residents about their early years in Teaneck. This contest encourages intergenerational relationships and supports the fight against ageism.
- **Age-Friendly Ridgewood** is establishing Neighborhood Networks in collaboration with local Homes and School Associations, encouraging neighborhoods to help older community residents with household services. The program is initiated through local schools to encourage intergenerational relationships between youth and older residents.
- **Generations for Garfield** organized Walking Clubs with seniors as team leaders. Garfield residents are encouraged to sign up at the Garfield Health Department, where group walks occur every Thursday. Participation is encouraged through monthly raffles of fitness equipment.
- **Westwood For All Ages** collaborated with Westwood library to host a birthday celebration for seniors in their 80s, 90s, and 100s. The mayor and council were in attendance, along with 100 seniors and community members of all ages. This event was part of the fight against ageism and celebrated intergenerationality among Westwood residents.
- **The Tri-Town 55+ Coalition** implemented a Ride for Seniors program in partnership with GoGoGrandparent, an on-demand transportation company that uses Lyft or Uber services for older adults without smartphones or apps. This subsidized transportation service is for Chatham and Madison residents over 65. Over 1000 rides have been provided since the program's inception in 2017.
- **SOMA: Two Towns For All Ages** has improved communications for seniors with a monthly calendar, a printed newsletter, and a website to coordinate the multiple classes, events and services in both towns.
- **Lifelong Elizabeth** has hosted three Senior Safety Days to present information on public transportation services, walking safety, food safety, and fall prevention. Lifelong Elizabeth invited 11 vendors and four speakers to discuss topics of concern raised in an online survey assessment.
- **Lifelong Plainfield** is collaborating with Healthy Plainfield, the City of Plainfield's Health Initiative, to develop and implement a plan to streamline community messages and engage a wider audience including seniors and their families. The partnerships include the Plainfield School District, faith-based groups, senior living communities, and others that allow Lifelong to broaden its engagement.

- Record quantitative data such as attendance on program activities to define results and impact.
- A baseline assessment survey should serve as the pre-implementation evaluation. A follow-up survey including best practices and lessons learned should be the post-implementation portion of the evaluation process.

MORE RESOURCES

Grotta Fund for Senior Care: Improving the Quality of Life for Older Adults in Essex, Union, and Morris counties in New Jersey
The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation: Supporting Early Childhood, Aging in Place, and Medical Research in Bergen and Passaic counties
AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities
A Blueprint for Action: Developing a Livable Community for All Ages