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## Georgetown COA FY16 Annual Report

### Georgetown Council on Aging FY 16 Annual Report

As a result of solid community support, the Georgetown Council on Aging (COA) ended Fiscal Year 2016 in a very strong position, with all of the components in place necessary to move forward with construction of the Georgetown Senior Community Center. Previously, voters had approved the money needed to design and plan the engineering needed to modify a wing of an elementary school (Perley School) for use as a Senior Center. At the November Special Town Meeting, voters approved \$175,000 to begin the construction work involved in repurposing the five classrooms. Following completion of the Shared Use Agreement between the Georgetown School Department and Board of Selectmen, Ambient Temperature Corp. of Newburyport was selected as the project's General Contractor. At the Special Town Meeting in May, voters approved an additional \$50,000 for construction work and then approved \$125,000 from the Community Preservation Fund for the remainder of the money needed to complete the project. Free of charge, carpentry students from the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School have provided some of the rough construction work while staff from the Georgetown School Facilities Department have also provided the project with in-kind support. The project is estimated to be complete by the end of October or early November. Based on the documentation of increased services and care management required for a steadily expanding elder population, voters also approved an increase in the COA Personal Services (salary portion) from \$82,489 to \$96,922, a 17 percent increase in the COA's FY17 Budget, which will allow the COA Outreach Worker and Administrative Assistant to move from part time hours to full-time positions once the new facility is complete. The consolidation of the COA's activities, programs and services into one location will allow the COA to serve the Town's current and future population in a more efficient and effective manner. Residents of all ages are excited about the possibilities that the new Georgetown Senior Community Center will bring to the town.

In Fiscal Year 2016, board members and their positions included: Jeannine DesJardins, Chair; Claire Maimone, Vice Chair; Jean Perley, Secretary; Sue Gardiner, Treasurer; Esther Palardy Corona Magner, Diane Prescott, Nancy Thompson, Carol Sheehan, Ann Stewart and Alternate Board Members Sue Clay and Janice Downey. Following the resignation of Sue Gardner in March, board member Carol Sheehan was elected as the board's treasurer and Janice Downey was appointed as an alternate member. Council on Aging staff members in FY

16 included Director Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Outreach Worker Kirsten Klueber, Newsletter Editor/Administrative Assistant Julie Pasquale, Van Driver David Hall, Meal Site Supervisor Ailene "Mickie" Locke and Meal Site Assistant Al Miller.

Committed to the goal of supporting elders as they age in place, the COA offers a wide range of cultural, social, health, informational and educational programs to local elders and their families. According to the 2010 Federal Census, 1,428 elders over the age of 60 live in Georgetown.

However, the 2016 local residents' age list shows that 1,886 elders over the age of 60 live in Georgetown representing approximately 22 percent of the town's total population.

As a result of growth as well as the Georgetown COA's increased connections with the community, the number of duplicated elders served by COA programs and services grew to 7,142 in FY16, a 12 percent increase from FY15. At the same time, the number of duplicated non-elders served also saw a 12 percent increase from the previous year. Including requests for support and assistance with food resources, fuel assistance, transportation as well as support for complex clients living with a variety of physical and psycho/social needs, the COA served 325 non-elders with case management and advocacy in FY16.

As an example of community partnership, the Trustees of the Perley Free School again provided a fuel assistance program to local residents who experience difficulty with heating costs. In addition to the money that is used to fund scholarships for Georgetown~graduates and alumnae, the Trustees oversee a small endowment to aid Georgetown residents facing financial hardships. Concerned for people who may have difficulty with heating costs, the Trustees continued the plan for a limited heating assistance program for a fourth year. In FY16, the Trustees provided nine individuals with heating assistance, an increase from the six individuals served in FY15. The grassroots effort enhances heating assistance programs available through Community Action, allowing more individuals to receive services within the community.

The COA's partnership with a local elder lawyer Elaine Dalton has allowed the COA the opportunity to provide a monthly elder law consultation program. With questions regarding elder law, estate planning, health care proxies and advance directives, the program provides elders with resources and information about the next steps to take. In FY16, the program served 10 unduplicated individuals and will continue in the new fiscal year.

The support of Crosby's Marketplace, a local grocery store, as a sponsor for our monthly Men's Breakfast program further illustrates the strength of the COA's partnerships within the community. Along with cooking a nutritious breakfast for the participants, I plan and coordinate speakers for the program. With topics ranging from health and wellness, Medicare, retirement, Veterans' issues, current events, town government, home and personal safety, and local history, speakers are planned each month.

During Fiscal Year 2016, we served a total of 186 men, an average of 16 per month, a 15 percent increase from FY15.~

Participation in the monthly breakfast program continues to evolve and expand with new participants joining the group. Along with an opportunity to share a nutritious meal and socialize with friends, the breakfast program provides the COA with an opportunity to develop relationships with men in the community and to identify their specific needs and concerns.

Participation in the income tax preparation program available through the Association for the Advancement of Retired People (AARP) also saw increased participation this year. Two volunteer Tax Aides prepared state and federal tax returns for 103 unduplicated individuals at the Council on Aging's office this past year. The preparers also served ten unduplicated non-elders in FY16. Along with income tax preparation, the Tax Aides also provided participants with information regarding the state's Circuit Breaker Tax Credit and helped resolve individual issues with the state Department of Revenue regarding requests for additional verification from elders.

A continued partnership with the Georgetown School Department has allowed the COA to further expand programs and activities available to local elders within the community. Seven elders participated in a monthly guest reading and "listening" program that allows participants to read to early elementary students while also listening to young readers read to them. To supplement the exercise classes available through the COA, the Georgetown School Department continues to offer the use of their building for indoor walking during the fall and winter. Eight participants walked a total of 13 times at the school this year. As another intergenerational opportunity, 12 elders attended a high school concert program and holiday breakfast. In April, the Culinary Arts Department at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School prepared and served a special lunch for elders at the COA meal site. Along with the very fine cuisine, students and elders enjoyed an opportunity to share and socialize. The programs offered in partnership with the School Department continue to be well-received and are all scheduled to resume this fall. With the move to the new Georgetown Senior Community Center at the Perley School, plans are already underway for future intergenerational activities.

The Friends of the Council on Aging group continues to increase community support and raise awareness for the COA's mission of serving elders and their families in the community. Gift basket raffles at recent elections have raised both funds and "friends" for the Council on Aging. The COA donation account has also gratefully received several gifts which have been used to support COA programs and activities.

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The Georgetown and Merrimac Councils on Aging continue to share an 8 passenger van as part of a regional transportation plan. Funded with a grant from the state Department of Transportation's Mobility Assistance Program, the van is leased from the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) and provides a vital link to needed services for elders and disabled individuals in Georgetown and Merrimac. To support independence and the goal of aging in place, the COA van traveled 5,128 miles in FY16 providing 18 individuals with 80 weekly shopping trips and 35 elders with 53 social recreational outings to restaurants, shopping areas, museums and other recreational areas, a respective 28 percent and 40 percent increase from the number of elders served in both programs in FY16.

Providing elders with transportation to medical appointments, six volunteer drivers serving through Northern Essex Elder Transportation (NEET), Inc. supplied 8 elders with 64 round-trip out-of-town medical appointments located in Salem, North Andover, Newburyport, Amesbury, Beverly, Lawrence, Ipswich, Wenham Peabody, Danvers, Haverhill, Rowley, Georgetown and Groveland this past fiscal year. The eight volunteer drivers with the NEET program donated approximately 73 hours driving a total of 1,959 miles to provide 11 elders with transportation to their medical appointments, a 37 percent increase in service from FY16. Although some of our clients and drivers have both aged out of the program and it continues to be a challenge to find younger drivers, the service continues to be valuable to those served and those providing the service.

To further address elder transportation needs, the COA staff also provides elders with information and referrals to the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's (MVRTA) Ring and Ride transportation service. Using wheelchair lift-equipped MVRTA vehicles, the Ring and Ride program provides Georgetown residents with free curb-to-curb transportation to anywhere in Amesbury, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newbury/Byfield, Newburyport, North Andover and West Newbury as well as to the Rowley Commuter Rail Station and Market Basket. The COA staff also provides clients with information and referrals to the MVRTA's Boston and Peabody Medi-Ride Medical Service as well as the Mass Health Transportation Program, if eligible.

While the COA prepares for the new Senior Center facility to become ready for use, the COA continues to offer programs and services in three different locations: office space at Town Hall; rented space at the First Congregational Church which is used for congregate meals, programs, services and activities; and activity space made available without charge by the Georgetown Housing Authority at the Trestle Way Community Building. Exercise classes, the Men's Breakfast, TRIAD and some social events are held in the community room located at the town's public housing while referral, insurance counseling, outreach, transportation coordination, income tax assistance and newsletter production take place in the COA office space located at Town Hall. Assisted by two part-time staff members, the COA Director continues to divide time between the office at town hall as well as coordinating and overseeing activities in the other two locations. With 30 elders participating in the Town's Tax Incentive Program, the COA has gained assistance from four volunteers who provide support for some of the programs and activities that take place at the three different locations.

Weekly exercise, game and craft programs along with seasonal luncheons, socials and monthly birthday parties all saw a 28 percent increase in participation this year. Participation in COA exercise programs increased from 45 unduplicated elders in FY15 to 60 unduplicated elders in FY16 while participation in COA Recreation/Socialization programs increased from 765 duplicated elders in FY15 to 977 duplicated elders in FY16. Community education and health information and prevention programs were also well attended this past year. The duplicate count of elders eating lunch at the congregate meal site saw a slight decrease this year but the number of elders playing cribbage and card games before lunch continued to show additional participation. Sponsored by a grant

from the Georgetown Cultural Council, a series of five musical and theater programs were well attended by 97 unduplicated elders this year, a 32 percent increase from FY16.

A continued connection with Emmaus, Inc. of Haverhill allows the 6-member doll-making group to create hand-sewn dolls for children living in local emergency shelters. Most of the fabric and stuffing material needed for the program is donated by individuals within the community. This year, the COA Director and Outreach Worker delivered 161 dolls to the program's family shelter in Haverhill. The relationship with Emmaus has brought real meaning and purpose to the doll-making group and the relationship continues to be a benefit to the participants as well as to the recipients of the dolls.

On a monthly basis, a SHINE Counselor (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Elders) is available to meet with people to discuss health insurance questions and concerns. The SHINE Counselor and COA Director often work together to provide clients with a higher level of service, sometimes meeting together or separately to assist clients with health insurance, prescription drug insurance or to provide assistance in completing state or Federal program applications. The meetings often lead to additional outreach to the clients. This year, the COA has seen a significant increase in the number of younger elders seeking supplementary health insurance information as they turn 65 years and prepare to retire. This trend provides evidence to support the position that a steadily increasing local elder population will generate a greater demand for services within the community. During the past year, the SHINE counselor and COA Director met with 63 unduplicated elders to assist with Medicare, Medigap policies, prescription drug plans and other health insurance issues, a 16 percent increase from the 54 individual served in FY16. In October, 10 individuals attended a forum with SHINE representatives from Elder Services of Merrimack Valley (ESMV) to discuss recent changes in the health insurance industry. The program was televised by Cable TV, reaching an even greater audience within the community.

In partnership with the Board of Health, the monthly blood pressure clinics and annual flu clinic all saw steady and stable participation with a 25 percent increase from 44 unduplicated elders in FY16 to 55 unduplicated elders in FY16. The COA's Durable Medical Lending Program loaned 60 pieces of medical equipment to 34 unduplicated individuals this year, an increase from the 40 pieces of equipment loaned in FY16.

The Georgetown TRIAD continues to hold successful safety presentations and programs at Trestle Way in Georgetown. Along with the Essex County Sheriff's Department, the Georgetown TRIAD includes active participation by the Georgetown Police and Fire Departments, the Council on Aging, the Housing Authority and local elders. At least 23 elders participated in TRIAD programs presented by the TRIAD group a Scam Prevention program along with a Senior Photo ID and ICE Your Phone events that also featured File of Life and Grab and Go information tables. Several members of the Georgetown Police Department were also on hand to present important community safety information.

Providing evidence of the Georgetown COA's increased community connections, client finding with contacts from elders new to the town or to the COA remained steady at 44 unduplicated elders. Including requests for support and assistance with food resources, fuel assistance, transportation as well as support for complex clients living with a variety of physical and psycho/social needs, the COA also served 169 unduplicated elders with case management and advocacy in FY16 which includes maintaining a confidential client file with emergency contact information on each elder served as well as ongoing progress notes on specific elders who receive case management services. In addition to home visits and office appointments, ongoing client support is provided with weekly reassurance calls to frail and homebound elders. In FY16, 384 reassurance/wellbeing calls were made to 345 elders. The COA also received 2,209 telephone calls and requests for information, assistance and referrals from elders this year. To offer additional outreach within the community, the COA Director wrote 50 sympathy, get well, thank you and thinking of you notes to local elders and family members.

In April, COA staff members coordinated and prepared the COA's eighth annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast in April as a way to acknowledge and thank many of our volunteers. The breakfast was attended by more than 40 volunteers, including town officials and administration. During the breakfast, the COA Director also held a training session for the volunteers that included an

overview of updated information from *Massachusetts Population by Age* from the American Community Survey, *The Older Population* from the Administration on Aging and *Seniors Warn Beacon Hill Their Numbers are Surging* from the State House News Service. The presentation also included research regarding the connection between volunteerism and wellbeing and a review of COA participation statistics.

In FY16, the COA monthly newsletter was mailed or delivered to 8, 278 households. To further strengthen the COA's community outreach, the COA Director writes press releases for local newspapers and cable television and update the Town's website on a monthly basis. Along with posting information on the Cable TV community bulletin board, the Cable TV station frequently records our programs for use on the local Cable TV community access station, allowing information related to elder programs and services to reach a greater audience within the Town. Cable TV interviews and opportunities to present information regarding COA programs and services to community groups and town departments have also expanded the COA's connections within the community. The local newspapers have also supported the COA's community outreach work by publishing feature stories connected to specific elder issues as well as press releases and photographs advancing COA programs and events. This year, three local newspapers published 52 press releases, feature stories, photographs and letters to the editor publicizing COA programs and activities.

Along with increases in case management, an analysis of this year's statistics found that increases were primarily seen in health and community education as well as wellness and SHINE programs, which provides evidence to support the top three areas of concerns of health and wellness, financial worries and concerns regarding maintaining independence noted by elders in the COA's 2014 participation survey. The increases in this year's statistics also reflect the concern for economic security and health care noted by elders in the greater Haverhill area surveyed by Elder Services of Merrimack Valley in the 2012 Community Needs Assessment. The number of unduplicated elders served by the Georgetown COA in FY16 was 673, a 2 percent increase from FY15. The increase continues a trend that remains steady in the past several years.

The COA thanks the Kiwanis, the Georgetown School Department, Georgetown Cultural Council, Georgetown Country Gardeners Club, the Over the Hill Band, Ashland Farms, Crosby's Marketplace, the Trustees of the Perley Free School, Nunan Florist and Greenhouses, the Friends of the Georgetown Council on Aging as well as the Town departments including the Georgetown Housing Authority, and the Georgetown Police and Fire Department for their continued support during the past fiscal year. With deep appreciation, the COA thanks the more than 140 volunteers who serve as board members, volunteer drivers, program assistants, newsletter production crew, office support and volunteers during special events. Providing the Georgetown COA with almost 3,000 hours of volunteer service this past fiscal year, an estimated value of \$62,550, their hours of service are a valuable asset as well as a significant savings to the town. Not only are they a resource and valuable asset to the COA, but they are a gift to all the people whose lives they touch. Their support is essential to the COA's mission of serving elders and their families.

With the completion of the new Georgetown Senior Community Center scheduled for the fall of the new fiscal year, the Georgetown COA is well positioned to both expand programs and establish new programs while also gaining efficiency and effectiveness in serving elders and their families. In bringing together all of the components needed to plan, fund and build the new facility, the Town has established a model of care and commitment to the diverse age groups who live within the community.