

Georgetown Council on Aging FY 19 Annual Report

In our second year at the Georgetown Senior Community Center, increased participation continues to be evident in existing in new or expanded programs provided by the Georgetown Council on Aging. Along with the continued increase in participation, additional participants are now connected to the Council on Aging illustrating the success of strong programming in Fiscal Year 2019. Following the move to the new Georgetown Senior Community Center in February 2017, the COA saw an overall increase of 30 percent increase in participation for FY18 with 7,938 people signing in and out of the Senior Center. During the second year of the new facility, the COA saw an increase of 20 percent in participation as 9,446 people signed in and out of the Senior Center. This continued trend in increased participation shows that the COA has been successful in deepening connections within the community. While the first year of the Senior Center saw an immediate increase in participation due to the new opportunities provided by the facility, this second year of increased participation shows that the Council on Aging has been successful in building programming and addressing the needs of additional individuals. Based on both the documentation of increased services and care management required for the growth in elder population along with a move to resolve gender inequality in the work force, voters approved an increase in the COA Personal Services (salary portion) from \$100,342 to \$129,607 in the COA's FY20 budget as well as an increase in the expense line from \$39,665 to \$39,665 in the COA's FY20 Budget. The new facility continues to allow the COA staff to serve the Town in a more efficient and effective manner. The COA has continued to add new programs while expanding other activities and services. Weekly and monthly programs include yoga, strength training Tai Chi and mixed exercise classes, a hot lunch program, cards, doll-making, bingo, men's breakfast, women's breakfasts, teas, blood pressure clinics, fitness equipment available for individual use, a food pantry, pool table, knitting and quilting groups, quilting classes, Mah Jong, Stamp Club, a Book Club, bereavement Group, walking club, bocce, movie and televised sporting event afternoons, and coordinated state Legislative office hours. Intergenerational activities include an on-going planting garden project with pre-school students and snow shoveling assistance for elders provided by high school students. Illustrating the success of the Senior Center and the community support for the COA programs, information on upcoming activities is often requested before the monthly newsletter is available and many people have scheduled other appointments around favorite weekly or monthly activities and programs.

In Fiscal Year 2019, board members and their positions included: Esther Palardy, Chair; Sue Clay Vice Chair; Jill Benas, Co-Secretaries; Diane Prescott, Nancy Thompson, Jean Perley, Caroline Sheehan and as well as Alternate Board Members Diane Klibansky and Darcy Norton. Following long-time board member Caroline Sheehan's resignation, Alternates Darcy Norton and Diane Klibansky were named full board members. At that time, Carol Westhaver and Jeanne Robertson were named as Alternate board members. When board member Jean Perley stepped down from her role as Secretary, board members Darcy Norton and Jill Benas became Co-Secretaries. Following long-time board member Nancy Thompson's resignation in May, Alternate Jeanne Robertson was

named as a full board member. In June, COA volunteer Martha Lucius was appointed as the COA's second alternate board member. Council on Aging staff members in FY19 included Director Colleen Ranshaw-Fiorello, Outreach Worker Kirsten Klueber, Administrative Assistant Julie Pasquale, Van Driver David Hall, Meal Site Supervisor Ailene "Mickie" Locke and Meal Site Assistant Carol Westhaver.

This year, the Board of Selectmen and the Council on Aging celebrated and honored a Georgetown resident who is now 102 years old, presenting her with the Town's Boston Post Cane, flowers and framed citations. State Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Lenny Mira both honored the resident with citations from the state Senate and state House of Representatives. As part of the presentation from the Board of Selectmen and COA, a reporter with the Georgetown Record interviewed the resident for a feature story in the weekly newspaper. The Board of Selectmen and COA also honored a second Georgetown resident at the time of her 100th birthday.

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 2019 local residents' age list shows that 2,034 elders over the age of 60 live in Georgetown representing approximately 24 percent of the town's total population.

As a result of the additional opportunities now available at the new Senior Center, the number of duplicated individuals served by COA programs and services grew from 10,476 in FY18 to 11,695 in FY19, a 12 percent increase from FY18. The increase in the duplicated elder count illustrates the success of housing all COA programs and services in one facility. As people arrive to participate in one activity, they are able to see other programs underway and consider further involvement. People have become comfortable in the facility and are more inclined to participate in programming at a Senior Center. With more access to staff and confidential meeting areas, participants are also more comfortable in seeking services and asking for information regarding the more complex services. The number of unduplicated non-elders continues to be consistent as people seek services such as support and assistance with food resources, fuel assistance, and transportation as well as case management support for complex clients living with a variety of physical and psycho/social needs. In FY19, the number of unduplicated non-elders served by the Georgetown COA was 457. Maintaining the non-elder count served by the COA continues to provide the evidence that the COA is often the only social service agency in the community and functions as a gateway to other services for both elders and non-elders.

As an example of community partnership and grass-roots effort, 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 seventh year. Often filling the gap for people whose income might be slightly higher than the limits required by Community Action and other programs, the Trustees provided five individuals with heating assistance during FY19.

The COA's continued partnership with a local elder law attorney 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 FY19, the program served 22 unduplicated individuals, an increase from the 16 people served in FY18.

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 a nutritious breakfast for the participants, speakers are planned for the monthly program. Topics range from health and wellness, Medicare, retirement, Veterans' issues, current events, town government, home and personal safety, and local history. Averaging 20 men per month, we served a total of 221 men during FY19, a 22 percent increase from the 181 men served in FY18. The group ranges in age from 58 years to 95 years and includes several World War II and Korean War veterans. The program continues to enjoy good participation from men in the community, with new participants joining the group since we moved into the new Georgetown Senior Community Center in February 2017. Not only does the breakfast program provide participants with the opportunity to share a nutritious meal with friends, but it also provides the COA with an opportunity to develop relationships with men in the community. Often uncomfortable with group participation, men represent an underserved population. As a result of the Men's Breakfast program, we have been able to identify and address specific needs for individual men but we have also seen participants establish friendships with each other that extend into other areas of their lives.

Participation in the income tax preparation program available through the Association for the Advancement of Retired People (AARP) also saw increased participation this year. Now that additional space is available at the new Senior Center, three volunteer Tax Aides prepared state and federal tax returns for 124 unduplicated individuals this past year, consistent with the number of people served in FY18. The preparers also served 8 unduplicated non-elders in FY19. Along with income tax preparation, the Tax Aides provide participants with information regarding the state's Circuit Breaker Tax Credit and helped resolve individual issues with the state Department of Revenue including 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. This year, a Community Service Program at the Penn Brook Elementary School provided holiday cards for Meals and Wheels consumers as well as Senior Center participants at three different holidays. Pre-school students created centerpieces for holiday meals. Students at the Penn Brook Elementary School organized and gathered several deliveries of donated food for the COA Marketplace. A monthly guest reading program resumed in

the pre-school. Several elders participated in an intergenerational planting project with the pre-school students that included planting daffodil bulbs in the fall and planting tomato, and herb seeds into a raised container garden this spring. As another intergenerational opportunity, 21 elders attended a high school concert program and holiday breakfast in December. In February, the Culinary Arts Department at Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School prepared and served a special Valentine's lunch for 67 elders at the Georgetown Senior Community Center. Along with the very fine cuisine, the special event provides students and elders an opportunity to share and socialize.

The Georgetown and Merrimack Councils on Aging continue to share an eight-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 Merrimack. To support independence and the goal of aging in place, the COA van traveled 4,5413 miles in FY19 providing 14 individuals with 96 weekly shopping trips and 25 elders with 52 social recreational outings to restaurants, shopping areas, museums and other recreational areas.

Providing elders with transportation to medical appointments, seven volunteer drivers serving through Northern Essex Elder Transportation (NEET), Inc. supplied 10 elders with 80 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 four volunteer drivers with the NEET program donated approximately 60 hours driving a total of 694 miles to provide the 16 elders with transportation to their medical appointments. Although some of our clients and drivers have aged out of the program and it continues to be a challenge to find younger drivers, several out of town drivers have stepped forward to drive for Georgetown elders. The transportation service continues to be meaningful to those served as well as to the volunteers who provide 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.

Weekly exercise, recreation, and game programs along with the meal site, cultural events, health and community education all saw significant increases in participation again this year. This year, fitness programs saw a 23 percent increase in the duplicated count from

2,462 in FY18 to 3,032 in FY19. Along with weekly yoga, strength training, Tai Chi, and individual use of fitness equipment, this year the COA added a group dance class along with an MCOA grant-funded walking club. As a result of the new and expanded fitness opportunities available at the Senior Center, the overall statistics show an increase in duplicated elders. More elders are spending more time participating in programs and activities on a weekly basis. Participation in COA Recreation and Socialization programs saw a 38 percent increase while Community Education, saw a 24 percent increase in participation showing that the Senior Center continues to address needs that were previously not met before the Senior Center was complete.

A continued connection with Emmaus, Inc. of Haverhill allows the 3-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, we delivered 212 dolls to the program's family shelter in Haverhill, an increase from the 129 created last year. In addition, the COA's knitting group has also begun to knit hats for both children and adults served by Emmaus. The relationship with Emmaus has brought real meaning and purpose to the doll-making and knitting groups 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 (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) Counselor 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 opportunities for the COA with the clients. During the past year, the SHINE counselor and COA Director met with 72 unduplicated elders, a 31 percent increase from the 58 individuals served in FY18, providing assistance with Medicare, Medigap policies, prescription drug plans and other health insurance issues.

This year, the COA was able to partner with Elder Services of Merrimack Valley in hosting a Medicare Open Enrollment Event in November. Coordinated and organized by the COA, three teams of SHINE Counselors met with 14 elders during the event, answering health insurance questions and comparing supplemental health insurance plans. The COA has continued to see an increase in the number of younger elders seeking supplementary health insurance information as they reach 65 years and plan health insurance for retirement. This trend provides evidence to support the theory that a steadily increasing elder population within the community will generate a greater demand for services within the community. Specifically planned for individuals in their early 60s, a Welcome to Medicare evening was held in May. SHINE representatives and the COA Director met with 14 people that evening, providing them with Medicare information along with information regarding the Senior Center and COA programs.

In partnership with the Town's Board of Health, the monthly blood pressure clinics and annual flu clinic all saw steady and stable participation with 23 unduplicated elders served at the monthly blood pressure clinics, an increase from the 17 unduplicated elders served in FY18. Thirty-nine elders were served at the annual flu clinic. Two non-elders

were also served at the monthly blood pressure clinic and five were served at the annual flu clinic. The COA's Durable Medical Lending Program loaned 75 pieces of medical equipment to 47 unduplicated elders this year, an increase from the 31 unduplicated elders served in FY18. Five pieces of durable medical equipment were loaned to four non-elders this past year.

Both the Georgetown Police and Fire Departments continue to provide important safety programs. The Georgetown Fire Department successfully applied for a grant program that allowed the purchase and installation of a number of Lock Boxes and Smoke Detectors throughout the community. In FY19, the Lock Box Program served 1 elder while the Smoke Detector Program served 3 elders. A grant for the new fiscal year is in place and the program will continue. Both the Georgetown Police and Fire Departments continue to present community education programs at the Senior Center providing participants with important safety and consumer protection information. The community education programs are often televised allowing the information to reach a greater portion of the community.

Providing evidence that the new Georgetown Senior Community Center continues to increase the COA's connections within the community, the COA received 2,786 telephone calls and requests for information, assistance and referrals from elders this year, a three percent increase from the 2,715 telephone calls and requests for information received in FY18. Responding to 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 166 unduplicated elders and 355 duplicated elders, a 24 percent increase from the 281 duplicated individuals served with case management and advocacy in FY19. The 24 percent increase in the duplicated elders served again this year supports the position that the Senior Center will continue to see more elders participate in programs and services on an on-going basis. In providing case management services, the COA maintains 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 FY19, 307 reassurance/wellbeing calls were made to 255 elders. To offer additional outreach within the community, the COA Outreach Worker and I wrote 88 sympathy, get well, thank you and thinking of you notes to local elders and family members, a slight increase from the 81 notes sent last year.

In April, the COA coordinated and prepared the COA's twelfth annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast 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, I also held a training session for the volunteers that included information regarding the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Data Report's Community Profiles, Gerontology Institute of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston and Services Delivered FY18, Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, Inc. During the training session, I also highlighted research regarding the connection between volunteerism and wellbeing as

well as a review of the increase in COA participation statistics over the year at the Senior Center.

This year, the COA's monthly newsletter was mailed or delivered to 9,519 households. To better reflect the focus and mission of the Council on Aging and the Georgetown Senior Community Center, the COA unanimously agreed to change the name of the newsletter from "A Few Gray Hairs" to "Living Well Together." In addition to mailing or delivering the newsletter to public locations, the newsletter is updated each month on the Town's website. To further strengthen the COA's community outreach, I write press releases for local newspapers and cable television and update the Town's website and Facebook page 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. Additional opportunities, such as a community-wide health fair, provide the COA with an opportunity to present information regarding COA programs and services to community groups and town departments. The opportunities for additional communication expand 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, four local newspapers published 76 press releases, feature stories, photographs and letters to the editor publicizing COA programs and activities.

Based on state and local demographic information, I anticipate that the Georgetown COA and Georgetown Senior Community Center will continue to see an increase in the demand for services to support elders living in the community as a result of the increase in elder population. According to the U.S. Census, the population of elders over the age of 60 years has increased to a total of 1,427, a 54 percent increase since 2000. However, the 2019 local residents' age list shows that 2,034 elders over the age of 60 live in Georgetown, which represents 24 percent of the town's population. The local demographic information supports the population projections presented by the UMass Donahue Institute of Economic and Public Policy Research Institute which estimates that the elder population in Georgetown will increase to 2,158 in 2020 and 2,922 in 2030. Each month, growth is noted in the Georgetown COA statistics. With an overall increase of 20 percent increase in participation, 9,446 people signed in and out of the Senior Center this past year. With an average increase of 24 percent, an analysis of FY19 statistics found that the growth in COA services and programs was primarily seen in case management, SHINE, health and wellness, recreation and socialization as well as programs that assist in maintaining elder independence. The analysis provides evidence to support the top three areas of concerns of health and wellness, financial worries and concerns regarding maintaining independence reported by elders in the COA's 2014 participation survey. Based on that information along with the increase in the elder duplicated count, the Georgetown COA anticipates significant future growth in the programs, services and activities offered at the Georgetown Senior Community Center.

The Friends of the Council on Aging group continue to increase community support and raise awareness for the COA's mission of serving elders and their families in the community. Along with raising "friends" for the COA, the on-going clothing and textile collection bin located at the Perley School has raised funds for Council on Aging programs and services. The group has been active in supporting and helping to facilitate programs such as the Women's Breakfast, socialization activities and special teas. The COA donation account has also gratefully received several gifts from residents and participants which have been used to support COA programs and activities.

The COA thanks the Kiwanis, the Georgetown School Department, Georgetown Cultural Council, 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 60 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 more than 3,000 hours of volunteer service this past fiscal year, an estimated value of \$63,000, their hours of service are a valuable asset as well as a significant savings to the town. Not only are they a valuable resource and support to the COA, but they make a real and tangible difference in the lives they touch. Their support is essential to the COA's mission of serving elders and others in the community.