

**Washtenaw County Blueprint for Aging
Year 2 Initiative Progress
March and April 2008**

Aging in Place Initiative

Community Volunteers Pilot Project: Workgroup members designed the structure for project manual, *Organizing Community Volunteers to Enhance Aging-Friendly Neighborhoods*. The manual draft includes lessons learned, themes, practical suggestions and resources for neighborhoods wanting to organize volunteers to assist seniors in aging in place. The manual will be available on line in early fall. Workgroup members provided ongoing editing and input.

Transportation Voucher Pilot Project: A report of findings from the pilot is posted on the Blueprint for Aging website. Pilot Projects Workgroup members designed and conducted brief phone surveys of sites serving seniors in three categories (senior centers, learning in retirement programs and medical clinics). The purpose of the surveys was to learn about the impact transportation issues have on program attendance and gauge interest in potential participation in a second voucher pilot.

Neighborhood Organization Support

BFA staff gave technical assistance and support at two Lohr village group meetings in March. This group meets bi-monthly. In April, the Lohr group was working on developing a business plan, investigating non-profit status, and applying for BFA community support. The Dexter-Miller Co-op, a village model group, continues to meet and operate. They continue to update BFA on their progress and participate in community meetings on village model developments.

Over 30 people attended the Blueprint sponsored workshop, "Neighborhood Approaches to Aging in Place," held at the Ann Arbor District Library's Mallet's Creek branch on April 5. BFA staff provided general information about village models and showed a short video of a successful Michigan model, ShareCare of Leelanau, MI. Following this introduction, Lois Jelnek, retired nurse and community member, described the organizing experiences of the Lohr Village group. Next, Perry Ohren of Jewish Family Service of Metropolitan Detroit gave a presentation about NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities). The audience had many questions for the speakers, and after the meeting, a group of residents from three local co-housing developments expressed their interest in investigating the village model as a possibility for their neighborhoods.

Senior Leadership Initiative

Senior members of the community contributed significantly to the high quality and impact of the Blueprint for Aging's *Aging With Attitude* exhibit. Ellen Wilt, 85-year old artist and Professor Emeritus of Art at Eastern Michigan University, lent her expertise as one of the show's three jurors. Besides a keen eye, she contributed her insight about representations of the elderly that move beyond the traditional. The two pieces fiber artist Anne Percy Knott, 67, exhibited in *Aging with Attitude* elicited much favorable commentary from visitors. Anne also contributed her time and knowledge in a meeting to plan discussions and workshops to follow the exhibit. Community activist and artist Carol Tice, took a group of residents from Sequoia Place Apartments (low-income housing for seniors) to see the exhibit and treated them to a catered lunch, followed by an art workshop. These same residents will participate in a "seamless collage" workshop led by *Aging With Attitude* exhibitor Suzanne Beutler, a local artist whose juxtaposition of family photographs and painting inspired them.

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Senior community members, Lois Jelnek, Al Feldt and Commissioner Barbara Levin Berger are taking leadership roles in organizing grass roots efforts in their neighborhoods to support residents so they may age in place in their own homes.

Technology Innovation Initiative

A six-month planning grant was submitted to Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. Blueprint director defended the grant at the Foundation review process. The Blueprint for Aging secured AAACF funds to create a Technology Village that would support Blueprint partner not-profit agencies.

Foundation Building Initiative

Core Leadership Team Meetings and Committees

Core Leadership had its bi-monthly meeting March 13. Written reports included progress from the Village Model, Senior Data, Senior and Community Centers, and Technology workgroups. Funding workgroup invited Debbie Jackson, consultant for Washtenaw United Way to discuss changes in the allocation process. BFA will lead the Aging in Place initiative, making decisions on best use of UW funds to serve older adults. The BFA Pilot Project coordinator presented a recommendation for a second wave of the Transportation Pilot Project that was approved by CLT members

Community Awareness, Education and Events

Aging with Attitude Art Exhibit

Opening with a gala attended by 300 people on Friday evening, March 7, this exhibit marked the first time the University of Michigan School of Art and Design has partnered with a community agency. The exhibit featured 56 pieces juried from over 200 entries and received a rave review from the Ann Arbor news. Chelsea, Michigan filmmaker, Tom McPhee film the gala opening as part of an upcoming senior-focused documentary. *Aging with Attitude* continued three weeks, through March 28. Visitor feedback rated highly the quality and diversity of the work, with several indications that the exhibit expanded viewers' sense of the possibilities inherent in aging. Other comments showed that viewers were inspired to find ways to express their own creativity.

Local Movie Opening [Young@Heart](#)

The Blueprint for Aging hosted a reception before the film *Young @ Heart* opened on Friday evening, May 2. Over 100 community members and agency personnel enjoyed hors d'ouevres and popcorn while networking and socializing before film that told the inspiring story of a Massachusetts choral group whose participants average age 80. Their renditions of pop, blues and punk rock songs were exhilarating, and the behind scenes story of the group was interesting, funny and poignant.

E-newsletter, Rethink Aging

A March edition of the Blueprint e-newsletter, Rethink Aging, went to over 250 persons on the BFA mailing list. Articles covered the Aging with Attitude art show, the Village Model

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Brownbag lunch and discussion series and the Community for a Lifetime award for Washtenaw County.

Blueprint for Aging Webpage

The Blueprint for Aging webpage has been revised and updated over the past several months to better reflect the Blueprint's presence in the community and extent of the work that is currently being done on strategic initiatives. Additions to the website include information and links to community events, a page dedicated to the BFA workgroups, and information on how to apply for Blueprint sponsorship of community grassroots efforts. The website has also been given a bit of pizzazz with the addition of color and pictures highlighting events hosted by FA.

BFA Collaborative Efforts and Initiatives

- *University of Michigan*-The Blueprint collaborated with the University of Michigan's School of Art and Design to develop and present the March 7-28 *Aging with Attitude* exhibit. The exhibit represents the first time the School of Art and Design has collaborated with a community organization. The University donated use of its Slusser Gallery, produced posters, postcards and bus placards and assisted with publicity for the exhibit. The Slusser gallery's director and staff hung the exhibit and then dismantled it and prepared it for return shipping. A member of the School of Art and Design's faculty designed the call for entries, all of the exhibit's publicity materials and served as a general advisor and jury member. Graduate students from the University of Michigan School of Music were hired to play in a jazz quartet at the opening reception.
- *Senior Advocates of Washtenaw*-Blueprint helped secure meeting space and distribute publicity for Senior Michigianians' Day Rally event in Washtenaw County to be held June 2. A BFA designate will introduce the Blueprint for Aging there and participate in a panel discussion with elected officials and AAA 1-B
- *Ann Arbor District Library*—Blueprint is working with the community outreach department of the library to design and publicize a community event, Neighborhood Approaches to Aging in Place. To be held April 5, the event will offer information on innovative models that help seniors remain in their homes.
- *Ann Arbor District Library* – BFA is collaborating with the library on a blog opened for discussion of the Aging with Attitude art exhibit
- *Brecon Village* – BFA staff is leading a 6-week workshop on Women and Aging, using curriculum developed by Marge Alpern, formerly with UM Institute of Gerontology
- *Cave Studio*, -Award winning video documentarian, Tom McPhee, filmed opening night of the Aging with Attitude art exhibit as a part of his documentary on aging called My Senior Year. To view the video, visit our website, www.BlueprintForAging.org .
- *A Family Affair*—Staff met with funeral director Erika ---- to begin plans for a Blueprint sponsored community event that will further a discussion on lower cost funerals and possibilities for a green burial ground in Washtenaw County
- BFA staff attended community workshop on Collaborations

Grant Management

Weinberg Foundation

Staff participated in technical assistance call for Caregiver Support grant. BFA will submit grant with partners for respite and support for family and informal caregivers. Representative so six partner agencies met to discuss an approach to collaborative services that will be sent in a Letter of Intent to

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the Weinberg Foundation in June. We will be notified in August whether we have been chosen to submit a full grant in September.

BFA Staff

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Blueprint for Aging Director and Project Manager attended a lecture by Marc Freedman, author of *Encore: Finding Work That Matters In the Second Half of Life*. Mr. Freedman is one of the nation's leading thinkers and writers on the opportunities presented by the Aging of America. His talk and the panel that followed addressed ways can we best capture experienced adult talent, time and resources to improve our economy and job market.