



Ready for the aging boom?

“A livable community is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features and services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life.”

– Source: *Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide* – AARP Public Policy Institute

AGING READINESS PLAN

Community engagement workshop

May 19, 2011

Clark County’s population aged 65 and older is expected to increase rapidly in the next 20 years. To prepare, the county is developing an Aging Readiness Plan. The document will assess the county’s readiness to serve as a home for an aging population and identify resources and services that should be in place to support older residents. A draft plan is tentatively scheduled to be available for public review in late 2011.

The **community engagement workshop** is the fifth and final one the Aging Readiness Task Force will host as members work on the plan for

the aging boom and keep the community livable for residents of all ages.

A key feature of a livable community is residents’ high level of engagement, including community attachment, helping neighbors, organization memberships, volunteering, charitable giving and involvement in community affairs. Community engagement is linked to longevity, physical health, life satisfaction and other indicators of the psychological well-being of older adults.



Workshop schedule

1:45 p.m.

Check-in

2 p.m.

Introductions, meeting purpose and ground rules
Bill Barron, Clark County Administrator

Welcome

Jesse Dunn, Chair,
Aging Readiness Task Force

2:10 p.m.

Keynote: Community engagement

Leslie Foren, Director of Operations, Elders in Action

3:05 - 4:45 p.m.

Table discussion and reporting back on four questions;
25 minutes per question

4:45 p.m.

Discussion summary

Pete Mayer, Director,
Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation

4:50 p.m.

What volunteering means to me

Bud Van Cleve, Community Activist, Aging Readiness Task Force member

4:55 p.m.

Closing comments

5 p.m.

Adjourn

Speakers



LESLIE FOREN

Ms. Foren has more than 18 years of experience in the field of aging, having worked a majority of her career in nonprofits. A graduate of Madonna University in Michigan, she moved to Portland in 1998 to pursue her career in the field of Gerontology. Since 2008, she has been the director of operations at Elders in Action, a nonprofit whose mission is “to assure a vibrant community through the active involvement of older adults.” She is responsible for development, implementation and evaluation as well as training, supervising and overall management of the agency’s 170 volunteers.

Ms. Foren also is secretary for the business advisory committee of Easter Seals of Oregon’s Senior Community Service Employment Program and a member of Oregon Gerontological Association, Northwest Volunteer Administrators Association and Nonprofit Association of Oregon. She is a regular guest speaker at Portland State University’s College of Urban and Public Affairs, School of Community Health.

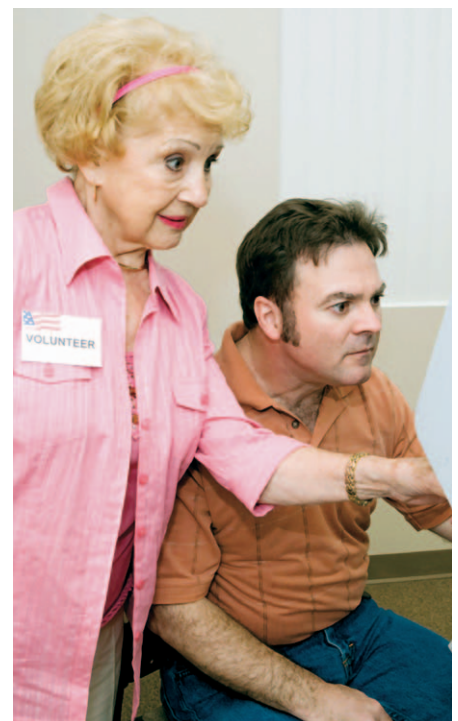
Aging and community engagement facts

- The number of people age 65+ will increase rapidly over the next two decades as Baby Boomers turn 65. In 2032, the nationwide population age 65+ will exceed the number of children. By mid-century, there will be about 4 million more old people than young people.
- The greatest growth in the 65+ population will occur between 2011 and 2029 as those born between 1946 and 1964 turn 65.
- Four in 10 Americans surveyed by AARP indicate they are very or somewhat likely to increase the amount of time volunteering in the next five years, and nearly the same proportion (39 percent) of retired Americans report they increased their volunteering when they retired.
- Fifty-two percent of those surveyed by AARP said their desire to “help people in need” was an extremely important motivation for volunteering, followed by 48 percent who identified the desire to “stay healthy and active.”
- Those surveyed expressed the most interest in volunteering:
 - through faith-based or religious groups (45 percent)
 - by mentoring or tutoring young people (40 percent)
 - by helping the elderly live independently (38 percent)

- More than half of all those surveyed (51 percent), including 55 percent of Boomers, said education awards they can earn and give to a child in exchange for significant levels of volunteer service would have a big or moderate impact on their volunteer activities. Forty-two percent of those surveyed and 47 percent of Boomers cited access to group health insurance as another key incentive to volunteering.
- Fifty-five percent of those surveyed are interested or participate in at least one established volunteer program, such as Meals on Wheels, Senior Companions, Volunteer Senior Rangers, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Foster Grandparents, Driver Safety, Tax Aide and Peace Corps. Although a relatively small percentage expressed interest in any one program, this minority represents millions of Americans who are still interested in formal programs.
- Those surveyed also identify key barriers to their civic engagement.
- Nearly seven in 10 (68%) non-volunteers report they have not been asked to serve. Existing research shows that when personally asked to serve, more than eight in 10 Americans (81%) do.
- More than seven in 10 prefer to volunteer without a regular schedule. One in five (21 percent) prefers volunteering on a regular, ongoing basis. The more a person volunteers, the more likely he or she is to prefer a regular schedule.

- While 49 percent say they prefer to help others and address problems directly and on their own, nearly half (47 percent) either express a preference for volunteering through an organization (36 percent) or both on their own and through organizations (11 percent), including 50 percent of Boomers.
- The most significant barriers to volunteering are a perception of a lack of time (identified by 70 percent) and the need to make money (identified by 54 percent). Nearly half (48 percent) cite not having enough information about volunteer opportunities as a barrier. Other barriers include lack of a compatible group, no match for skills and experience, discomfort working with strangers, and lack of transportation.
- A study of adults age 65 and older found the positive effect of volunteering on physical and mental health is due to the personal sense of accomplishment an individual gains from his or her volunteer activities. (*Herzog et al., 1998*)
- Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, as found in a study of older adults. According to this study, formal volunteering moderated the loss of a sense of purpose among older adults who had experienced loss of major role identities, such as wage-earner and parent. (*Greenfield and Marks, 2004*)

- A study of older adults found participation in community service was more strongly correlated with life satisfaction for retirees than for those who continued to work for pay. (*Harlow and Cantor, 1996*)
- Another study found that, in general, volunteers report greater life satisfaction and better physical health than do non-volunteers, and their life satisfaction and physical health improves at a greater rate as a result of volunteering. Also, older volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and greater positive changes in their perceived health as a result of their volunteer activities than do younger volunteers. (*Van Willigen, 2000*)



After the workshop ~ next steps

This summer, the Aging Readiness Task Force's subcommittees will finish the development of each element (Housing, Transportation/Mobility, Healthy Communities, Supportive Services and Community Engagement) of the Aging Readiness Action Plan. Later this year, the task force will host a community forum for the public to hear about identified challenges within our community and recommended strategies to combat them. The public will have the opportunity to review the Action Plan and provide comment before the plan is finalized. Once completed, the plan will be reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners.

Stay informed

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Join the e-mail list at www.clark.wa.gov/aging/contact.html.

