



COMMISSION ON AGING

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2, 2015



Commissioners Mary Boutain, Georgia Schaich (served 2010-2014), Jack Kahn and Alice Oestreich



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
commission on aging

Mission

The Commission on Aging advocates for and advises the Mayor, City Council and others about the status and needs of older adults in Bloomington and serves as a catalyst for improving public awareness of issues facing the senior and aging community. We work in collaboration with diverse community members and organizations to build bridges, open dialogue, celebrate accomplishments, encourage programming, and explore issues and concerns of older adults. Our intent is to promote solutions to the challenges of an increasing older adult population and celebrate the contributions of our older citizens.

Membership

- The members of the Commission on Aging are Lauren Cowan, Mary Boutain, Julie Hill, Sophia Hauserman, Susan Snider Salmon, Gail Londergan, Jack Kahn, Vice Chairman and Alice Oestreich, Chairman.

Summary Activities 2015

- Sponsored the fifth annual Creative Aging Festival with over 30 events in Bloomington during the month of May.
- One commissioner served on the Affordable Living Task Force.
- Members of the Commission on Aging assisted in the organization of Sally's Place, a weekly gathering place for seniors at the Salvation Army located in downtown Bloomington. Activities, lunch and public lectures are enjoyed by members of the public.
- Sponsored a public viewing of the White House Conference on Aging that was live-streamed July, 13, 2015 at the Monroe County Public Library.
- Participated in the 50+ Expo and the 8th Annual Active Living Coalition Health Fair.
- Co-sponsored *Navigating the Caregiver Challenge* with the City of Bloomington and Area 10 Agency on Aging, November, 2015. This event hosted 3 educational panels addressing issues caregivers face in our community.
- Developed a Task Force to review "Best Cities for Successful Aging" report produced by Milken Institute and review Bloomington's progress.
- Currently reviewing recommendations from the White House Conference on Aging.

2015 marked the 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act, as well as the 80th anniversary of Social Security. On July 13, The White House hosted a special Conference on Aging to recognize the importance of these programs and to address issues concerning older adults and aging services in America. The Commission on Aging remains committed to identifying emerging issues of the older adult population, research options and identify solutions to address the needs of older citizens and to celebrate the contributions of older adults in order that all people can live meaningful lives regardless of age or ability.

Recommendations for 2016

The Commission on Aging will continue to engage city officials and business leaders to build a community for a lifetime for all ages and abilities. We believe wholeheartedly that when a city is truly accessible and supportive of its older citizens there are lasting benefits for all. To that end, the Commission on Aging will advise the incoming Mayor and City Council members the findings and recommendations of their review of the "Best Cities for Successful Aging" report produced by the Milken Institute. The Commission will make recommendations to the City Planning Department with regard to the Growth Policies Plan and continue to serve on the Affordable Living Task Force. Planning for the sixth annual Creative Aging Festival is underway which will include a presentation by the national dementia care expert, Teepa Snow, and many other professional presentations along with activities that encourage creativity of older adults.

Initiatives of the Commission on Aging

In a year that marked the 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act, as well as the 80th anniversary of Social Security, the Commission on Aging focused efforts on celebrating the contributions of older adults in Bloomington, continued to educate members of the Commission and the public on policy issues facing older adults and provided a forum for caregivers to express their concerns, rewards of caregiving as well as learn from one another's experience.

As the demographic landscape of the United States continues to shift and the number of people 65 and older in the U.S. grows, the Commission on Aging remains committed to educating policy makers and advocating for needed services to make Bloomington an excellent place to live for people of all ages and abilities. To this end, the Commission supports two initiatives.

Creative Aging Initiative - Coordinate and assist the development of community events and collaborations that enrich the lives of older adults with an emphasis on encouraging best practice programming and workforce development opportunities.

Current project:

- Creative Aging Festival - A celebration to promote wellness, lifelong learning and creative engagement for older adults and the fostering of inter-generational relationships during the month of May, which is National Older Americans' Month. A public face to the Commission on Aging, the Creative Aging Festival aims to cultivate a more positive perception of aging by focusing on the strengths, potential and achievements of our older citizens through a multitude of events and activities organized by various community agencies and groups.

Building a Community for a Lifetime - Advocating for policy change, systems development and programming that makes Bloomington a great city for all ages and abilities. We are building a community that values and supports people as they age.

Current projects include:

- Advocating for the establishment of a community center for older adults: Advancing a community discussion of the benefits of a community center for older adults and educating potential commercial partners of those benefits. Engaging older adults in the discussion and advocacy of such a center.
- Reviewing recommendations from the White House Conference on Aging and the Best Cities for Successful Aging Project.
- Sharing of Information: Inform and advise City Council members, City staff and the general public of proposed policy changes, aging issues and concerns. Collaborate with other City commissions and coalitions to further advance initiatives that support elements of a Community for a Lifetime such as affordable housing, addressing accessibility in the built environment and home construction and rehab, and accessible transportation options.

Creative Aging Initiative

Creative Aging Festival

In 2015, the Commission on Aging hosted the 5th Annual Creative Aging Festival. Over 30 events were hosted during the month of May by organizations throughout the community at 21 venues. Modeled after Ireland's National Bealtaine Festival, the Creative Aging Festival is not a single event, but instead, a series of community events held during the month of May, which is nationally recognized as "Older Americans Month". Scheduled events showcase the talents and skills of older artists and performers, promote inter-generational understanding through dialogue, sharing traditions and storytelling and enhance awareness about the value of creative engagement to adult health and well-being.

The festival is clearly at a point where it needs to grow, or at the very least, build capacity for a sustainable future. The relationship between creative pursuits and physical and mental health in later life has been well documented through the pioneering research of the late Gene Cohen, first Director on Aging at the National Institute on Mental Health. Advancing this wellness initiative with the purpose of enhancing the overall health of our community provides a useful framework for us in addressing the many challenges associated with the rapidly changing demographics of aging.

Furthermore, the Bloomington Creative Aging Festival is recognized as the first of its kind in the United States, which affords us the opportunity for Bloomington to host a regional creative aging conference and securing Bloomington's reputation as being a progressive community on the leading edge of the new positive aging movement.

Held annually in the month of May in celebration of Older Americans Month, the festival's goals are:

1. To identify and promote best practice efforts that create opportunities for older persons to explore, discover, and tap their potential.
2. To increase older adult participation in creative and cultural activities, thus building audience and supporting the city's economic development strategy.
3. To enhance the quality of life for the citizens of our community by encouraging community collaboration and fostering innovation in health prevention initiatives.

The 2015 Creative Aging Festival hosted a workshop entitled "The Art of Active Living" by Tim Carpenter, founder of EngAGE and producer of the Experience Talks radio show. Interactive workshops with Maria Genne, creator of Choreography of Care, offered easy tools and techniques to increase individual and community well-being through creative engagement for professional and family caregivers. Chuck Rainey, a professional musician and stroke survivor presented his story of recovery and demonstrated his musicianship skills in a concert performed with local singer songwriter, Krista Detor. Other workshops, including movement, creative writing, re-purposing materials into art objects were enjoyed by a varied audience.

The Commission on Aging thanks the following sponsors:

Gold Patrons: Airtime Acoustics, Bell Trace Senior Living Community, Center on Aging and Community and IU Health Bloomington.

Silver Patrons: Area 10 Agency on Aging, City of Bloomington Community and Family Resources Department, Dermatology Center of Southern Indiana, Gene Arnholt and Sophia Hauserman, Julie and Ted Hill and Susan Snider Salmon.

Contributors: Ann Armstrong, Jack and Eunice Kahn, Gail Londergan and Skip and Alice Oestreich

Building a Community for a Lifetime

Sally's Place

One of the most exciting accomplishments of the Commission on Aging in 2015 was assisting in the creation of Sally's Place. A Commission on Aging founding member, Georgia Schaich, along with current Commissioner, Sophia Hauserman, have been instrumental in the creation of this downtown Senior Club that hosts weekly activities at the Salvation Army. Speakers from a variety of services such as IU Speech and Hearing, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and other services of interest to seniors have provided information and stimulating conversation. Brain exercises and creative activities are enjoyed and lunch is made available through Area 10 Agency on Aging. This gathering place is free and open to the public each Wednesday and organizers provide a variety of activities to stimulate the mind, social connection and create a place where all people belong and are accepted.

SEEK Conference

Several members of the Commission on Aging attended the SEEK Conference in Columbus, IN. This conference is the national conference for the National Institute of Senior Centers, held at the Mill Race Center. Commission members

remain committed to strengthening Senior Programming in the City of Bloomington and hope to see Sally's Place continue to develop programming for older adults.

Navigating the Caregiver Challenge

The commission thanks the staff of the Community Family Resources Department for organizing an informative and well-attended workshop for family caregivers in November. The Commission on Aging served as sponsor for this successful event. Three panels made up of family caregivers spoke on a topics of resources, self-care and pre-planning for care of a loved one. Michael Shermis moderated and participants were encouraged to bring questions and comments to provide a learning experience for attendees. A resource fair with over 20 vendors was conducted on-site. The event was successful and the commission hopes to be involved in additional forums of this nature in 2016.

Reviewing Recommendations

The Commission is currently reviewing recommendations from the White House Conference on Aging and the Cities for Successful Aging project. Once every ten years, the White House hosts a conference on Aging. Several white papers have been developed to address specific issues effecting older adults. The Commission is reviewing these documents and will work to educate the Commission members and the public on the selected topics. The topics are elder justice, retirement security, and healthy aging.

During the White House Conference the Commission learned about the Cities for Successful Aging project. Bloomington Mayor Mark Kruzan had previously signed the mayoral pledge and the City is participating in this project. Members of the Commission formed a task force to review the data gathered about Bloomington and make recommendations to the incoming mayor and City Council. Review of this data is currently underway with the goal to present the review and make recommendations by January, 2016.

The Commission on Aging meets the second Tuesday of every month from 4:30-6:00 pm in the Hooker Room at City Hall and we welcome all who would like to join us. Please contact us via our City liaison, Sue Owens, at owenss@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3468.