

SENIOR CENTER/COUNCIL ON AGING (COA)

Fiscal Year 2007

PRINCIPAL GOAL: To run a multi-purpose Senior Center which serves as the community focal point for the provision of services to the elderly. The S. C. works to initiate, facilitate, coordinate, and/or provide those services which in the broadest sense enhance dignity, support independence, maintain health, and promote the involvement of Amherst's elderly in the general community.

THE SENIOR CENTER: A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Whether it's simply reading our 16-page bi-monthly newsletter, *THE SENIOR SPIRIT*, or coming in daily for the hot lunch program, Amherst's older residents have come to rely on the Senior Center. Here are examples of some of our program and service offerings in FY 07:

CLINICS: foot care, ear irrigation, massage, blood pressure, flu/health fair, hearing aid repair, free consultations two days a week with an R.N., and psychological counseling.

FITNESS PROGRAMS/CLASSES: Strength conditioning, gentle fitness, aerobics, Tai Chi, folkdance, Qigong, gentle yoga, twice weekly walking club, line dancing, ballroom dancing, meditation, strength training, and Senior Health & Fitness Day.

ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES: MSWord/beginning computer, Advanced Computer, Using the Internet, "Drivewell" Driver Improvement, Shakespeare's Hamlet, Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, knitting, sewing, watercolor/oil painting, cooking, financial management, memoir writing, short story readings, Amherst Fire Department classes in fire prevention, fall prevention & kitchen safety, Amherst Police Department RAD (Rape, Aggression and Defense) classes, Age of Darwin, cosmology, and Chinese calligraphy.

DISCUSSION/SUPPORT GROUPS: New Options, Kindred Spirits (Grandparents as Parents), Peace of Mind, Audio-Book Group for Visually Impaired Persons, Caregivers' and Late-Deafened Support Group.

SOCIAL RECREATION: Musical Showcases, bus/van/plane trips, Public Safety picnic, Thanksgiving Dinner, bridge, scrabble, Chinese mah-jongg, grocery bingo, sing-a-longs, travelogues, Thanksgiving Social, December Holiday Party, Volunteer Awards Social, and Grace Thayer's 100th birthday celebration.

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS: Financial Planning, Cooley Dickinson Hospital Changes, "Medicare and You," Reverse Mortgage, Improving Overall Physical Well-Being, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Estate Planning, Health Plan Options for Seniors, Long Term Care Insurance, Care At Home-What You Need to Know, Essential Documents, Avoiding Being a Victim of Fraud, How Heart Attacks and Other Illnesses Present Differently in the Elderly, The Many Facets of Buddhism, Familiarizing Yourself with Assistance Programs, Helpful & Harmful: The Truth About Annuities, Protecting Your Home for Your Family, Colorectal Cancer, Osteoporosis, How Cancer Doctors Think, Understanding Parkinson's Disease, Could Your Posture Use Improvement, Enhanced Family Care, The Energy Crisis, Good Stress-Bad Stress, Hip and Knee Pain, RAD Self Defense, Skin Cancer, Chiropractic, Abbeyfield Housing Concept, Body, Mind & Spirit Seminar, Walking for Exercise and Pleasure, Using Your Walker to Best Advantage, PVTA Informational Meeting, and Quabbin: The Valley Filled With Water.

SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS: HVES (Highland Valley Elder Services) Title III Congregate hot lunch program, Meals on Wheels evening hot supper through the University of Massachusetts, HVES Title III Home Delivered hot lunch, tax assistance, leaf raking, personal care/homemaking referral, friendly visitor program, social worker counseling/I+R, Brown Bag monthly groceries through Western Mass. Food Bank, Food Box monthly groceries through Amherst Survival Center, free weekly bread/produce giveaway, food pantry, volunteer driving, SHINE health insurance counseling, tax assistance, Tax Work-Off intake, subsidized van ticket sales, farmers' market coupon distribution, medical rides and free wheelchair short-term loan program.

COUNSELING CENTER ESTABLISHED WITH MONIES FROM TITLE III GRANT

In November 2006, with funding from a Title III grant through Highland Valley Elder Services, the Senior Center opened a Counseling Center where appropriate elders and caregivers could receive 6 free sessions of psychotherapy. The Counseling Center began as a collaboration with the Psychological Services Center of UMass/Amherst; but within the first 2 quarters of the grant cycle it became clear that because of a conflict with the funding cycle of the Title III grant and the timing of when UMass/Amherst doctoral students needed to decide on a practicum site, we would only be able to contract with two students for a total of 3 hours per week. Additionally, the administrative costs of the grant were very high for the small number of elders and caregivers who were receiving services. To maximize the number of elders seen, we decided to hire a licensed social worker who is a Medicare provider to provide the counseling, and to end the relationship with the University. Since that change occurred, there has been an increase in the number of referrals to the program. An interesting note is that we learned from some elders that they did not use the services of the Counseling Center because students were providing the psychotherapy. From November 2006 through the end of June 2007 there was an unduplicated count of 12 elders and caregivers who received psychotherapy and a duplicated count of 52 psychotherapy sessions.

PARTICIPATION IN FREE/LOW COST FOOD PROGRAMS

Name of Program	FY 04	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07
Congregate Hot Lunch	5,933	6,467 (9% increase)	6,973 (13.78% increase)	6,147 (11% decrease)
Meals on Wheels (UMass food delivered in evening)	3,796	3,843 (1% increase)	4,250 (11% increase)	5,006 (17% increase)
Home delivered meals (HVES food delivered at 11 AM)	12,889	13,663 (6% increase)	14,435 (6% increase)	16,118 (11% increase)
Brown Bag (Western Mass Food Bank)	696	735 (5% increase)	1,035 (41% increase)	1,017 (1% decrease)
Food Box (Survival Center food)	298	453 (52% increase)	450 (>1% change)	529 (17% increase)
Free Bread & Produce Giveaway	2,080	2,543 (22% increase)	5,282 (52% increase)	5,493 (3% increase)
Grocery Pantry Emergency Food Give-away	29	82 (283% increase)	102 (20% increase)	115 (12% increase)

In studying the changes this year, we weren't surprised to see a decrease in our congregate hot lunch program participation. The local transportation carrier that received the contract a year ago has been problematic and many riders are not using the service. When a new carrier begins at the beginning of 2008, we expect to resume the steady increase in our numbers. Our diners are now in pretty good shape physically, as the frailest among them went into assisted living, died or moved away. Our home-delivered meal program continues to grow at a fast pace, as people are living longer and find it difficult to shop and cook. As fuel costs increase, the home-delivered meal becomes more and more important also as a means to free limited funds for other essentials. We have six meal delivery routes daily to residents in Amherst and Pelham and we use volunteer drivers exclusively. With the price of fuel increasing, fewer drivers are willing to donate their gas; instead, they opt for the \$.35/mile stipend. The \$.91 per meal we get from our HVES Title III grant doesn't cover the gas reimbursement for meal recipients living on the far edges of Pelham. So far we haven't been able to find any Pelham residents to assist in deliveries there.

BUDGET CUTS

Our Program Coordinator, who was full-time (37.5/hrs) in FY 06, was reduced to four days a week (30/hrs) in FY 07 and to 20 hrs/wk in FY 08. Her salary is now primarily paid by the DEA Formula Grant, which will amount to \$19,383 for FY 08. Our Program Coordinator serves primarily as our Volunteer Coordinator, but she also has responsibilities to oversee a number of health/wellness and food programs. Our office supply and activities budgets were also cut by \$500.

"FRIENDS OF THE AMHERST SENIOR CENTER"

In 1977, members of the Amherst Council on Aging established The Senior Trust "to assist in carrying out programs designed to improve the quality of life for the aging," and this non-profit 501C-3 raised and accepted donations supporting programs and services of the Senior Center through the years. The fund now has about \$93,500 and continues to be a huge help in many areas. In 1995, the new Senior Center Director discovered that the design of the Trust was now in violation of State law – members of Town boards and committees must abide by the same conflict of interest laws as Town employees, i.e. they may not hold onto private monies on behalf of the Town. To remedy the situation, a committee was formed (including Town Counsel, the Town Manager, a few members of the COA and the Senior Center Director) to determine the best course of action. It was decided to establish a new 501C-3 corporation, entitled "Friends of the Amherst Senior Center," whose board of directors would be comprised primarily of non-COA members, so that fundraising could resume augmenting dwindling Town financial support. The bylaws have been written and all the necessary paperwork has been submitted to the Secretary of State, and presently we are waiting for our new tax ID number to be assigned. Transfer of Senior Trust monies to the Town and then from the Town to the Friends of the Senior Center fund will be on the fall 2007 warrant for Town Meeting approval.

TRANSPORTATION CRISIS

In October 2006, MV Transportation, a California company, was awarded a contract by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) to run its regional van service for elders, as well as for younger people with special needs. It quickly became clear to riders that the transition from one carrier to another was going poorly. Folks waited inordinate lengths of time for pick-ups, some were stranded waiting for return trips, drivers hired from out of the region wandered lost through the streets, and getting through on the phone lines was a huge waiting game. During this crisis, Senior Center staff, together with members of the COA, provided rides, assisted with

communications, and attended public hearings scheduled by PVTA to gather information about the issues riders were confronted with. The service has improved somewhat now, but MV will be losing its contract at the end of 2007. PVTA is in the process of selecting a new carrier at the present time.

PVTA has formed a regional advisory committee (of which our director is a member) to improve service with the current contractor and with transition to a new provider at the end of 2007. Communication has improved substantially with agencies such as ours.

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Although resources through the Town budget are limited, the Senior Center is able to offer a wide array of programs and services because of two important categories of contributions: **volunteer time** and **in-kind donations of goods and services**. In FY 07 approximately 12,492 hours of volunteer time was given by 265 volunteers in the following categories:

# of Hours Given	# of Volunteers
20 hours/week or more	1
5 hrs/wk up to 19.5 hrs/wk	11
1-5 hrs/wk	54
10hrs/yr to 50hrs/yr	102
Less than 10 hrs/yr	97

The value of these hours, according to the Points of Light Foundation is \$192,252.18.

In-kind donations represent tangible goods or services generally considered essential for the Senior Center’s operations, but not paid for out of its budget. **See the table below summarizing FY 07 In-Kind donations:**

In-Kind Donation	Value
Rent/Space (gross square feet=7,399)	\$73,000 value
Transportation	\$5,339.58
Utilities	\$13,652
Van Garaging, Gas & Service	\$524.56
Custodial/Maintenance	\$41,505
Plowing/Outside Maintenance	\$1,500
Durable Medical Equipment	\$600
Recognition Events	\$263.71
Donated Goods	\$7665.65
Value of Crafts Made & Sold for Senior Center	\$1,930
Newspapers	\$8,715
Speakers/Presenters	\$1,200
Entertainers	\$4,550
Furniture/Equipment	\$2,826
Supplies—Program & Office	\$98.45
Cable TV Service	\$185
Luncheons/food	\$116,489
Books/Videos/Puzzles	\$200

Subscriptions	\$25
Information Technology Hardware	\$8,000
Money donated, raised	\$17,595.91
Total	\$306,854

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Director