

Creating Community for a Lifetime Roadmap

Recommendations—Connections and Contributions

The Connections and Contributions issue area focuses on building an infrastructure to enable older adults to make meaningful voluntary contributions to their communities. It includes everything from fostering social connections and informal contributions at the neighborhood and community level to restructuring volunteer roles, exploring innovative incentive practices, and expanding volunteer management capacity in the community.

Connections and Contributions

Goal 1

Increase the number of older adults involved in formal and informal volunteer activities.

Objectives

- Increase access to information about volunteer opportunities including providing such information as part of retirement planning.
- Develop new volunteer opportunities so that everyone, regardless of condition or resources, can contribute, since research shows that engagement rates drop among persons with poor health, but that remaining engaged improves health.
- Develop new volunteer opportunities that build on current research about volunteer preferences for such elements as flexibility, episodic or time limited projects, and the desire for skill development.
- Develop or expand new volunteer roles, such as the health peer leader model.
- Strengthen understanding and use of incentives for volunteers such as the social components of programs and community recognition.
- Expand volunteer management capacity:
 - Increase support from agency leaders
 - Provide skill development opportunities for volunteer coordinators
 - Collaborate with organizations such as the Volunteer Management Association
 - Increase funding.

Goal 2

Increase civic involvement of older adults in efforts to improve the quality of life in Kent County.

Objectives

- Develop more opportunities for older adults to help meet community needs by serving with a broad range of organizations.
- Encourage local policy and planning bodies to have representation from all population groups including older adults.

Connections and Contributions continued

- Recruit additional older persons to become active with advocacy groups such as the Advocates for Senior Issues.

Goal 3

Develop a social marketing campaign/communication plan that confronts aging stereotypes and promotes a culture of engagement, vitality and activity based on contributions of older adults.

Goal 4

Foster meaningful connections with family, neighbors and friends and increase awareness of mutual assistance that occurs between generations.

Objectives

- Promote contacts between isolated older persons and members of the community through organizations such as senior centers, churches and neighborhood associations.
- Increase community awareness and understanding of informal contributions of older adults (e.g., as family and friend caregivers or as grandparents raising grandchildren).