Input welcome on 3-year area plan

Senior Resources welcomes comments and opinions on the draft area plan for Oct. 1, 2019 - Sept. 30, 2022. To receive a copy of the plan, you can call 231-733-3519 or 1-800-442-0054, or download it at: https://seniorresourceswmi.org/ under Publications.

Research has shed light on the impact social isolation and loneliness have on communities and individuals—and particularly on older adults.

Individuals experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation:
* Experience an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
* Disproportionately report lower incomes and having a debilitating health and/or mental health condition.
* Cost Medicare an estimated $134 more per person monthly ($1,608 annually), compared to individuals who were not socially isolated.
Comments may be submitted in writing by email to amy@srwmi.org, or through mail, Attn: Amy, 560 Seminole Road, Muskegon MI 49444.

**Companion Care Program receives national recognition**

The Senior Resources Care Connections program was recognized last year by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). Here's a recent article:

The Senior Resources team created a unique program in Muskegon to help older Americans avoid social isolation and maintain independence in their own homes. The Care Connections In-Home Personalized Companion Care program matches companions with older adults based on mutual interests, personality types and potential for compatibility. Once participants are matched to companions, the two individuals can participate in activities they both enjoy. Some examples are gardening, cooking, assisting with computer and internet use, walking, caring for pets and much more. This companionship program has made a positive impact on many lives.

Support coordination staff at Senior Resources saw a strong need to address social isolation with the older adults in their community several years ago, which led to its creation of this program. Early steps began in 2015 with the development of a business plan and by August of 2016 a program manager was hired.

The companions are often retirees who are not looking to boost their careers or add to their professional skills but want to connect meaningfully with an older adult and make a difference in their lives. Therefore, the application calls for only a few paragraphs from potential companions to learn why they are interested in the job and does not require a formal resume.

The program has been so successful that the team at Senior Resources has seen participants' health improve because they become engaged in activities that they wouldn't have otherwise. The program has averted nursing home placement due to improved cognitive function and physical health of participants.

The program has adapted over time to serve Social engagement improves the quality of life for older adults, resulting in dramatic health benefits, including:

- Longer life spans
- Decreased risk of disability and functional mobility decline
- Decreased likelihood of depression
- Decrease in cognitive decline

Opportunities for engagement include:

- Volunteering for a variety of organizations and institutions
- Exploring and participating in creative arts
- Looking for intergenerational opportunities to support youth
- Taking lifelong learning course or technology training at local colleges and universities
- Seeking employment opportunities or developing entrepreneurial skills

**May is Older Americans Month!**

Each year, more and more older adults are making a positive impact in and around Muskegon, Oceana and Ottawa counties. As volunteers, employees, employers, educators, mentors, advocates, and more, they offer insight and experience that benefit the entire community. That's why Older Americans Month (OAM) has been recognizing the contributions of this growing population for 56 years.

Led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) each May, OAM provides resources to help older Americans stay healthy and independent, and resources to help communities support and celebrate their diversity.

This year's OAM theme, Connect, Create, Contribute, encourages older adults and their communities to:

- Connect with friends, family, and local services and resources.
- Create through activities that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment.
- Contribute time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

Senior Resources celebrates OAM by promoting ways that community members of all ages can take part in helping our communities thrive. We encourage you to:

Connect: Call 2-1-1 for information on activities, services and programs for older adults and caregivers.

Create: Check out a senior center near you to see

May is Older Americans Month!
as a respite for family caregivers. The companions have found it helpful that they can set their own hours and gain a feeling that they truly helped someone. Because of its success, the program is being replicated in a nearby county. The team emphasizes that the key to developing a great companion program is matching the participant to the right caregivers for them. When the participant and companion form a genuine bond, that is the true success.

To learn more about the Care Connections In-Home Personalized Companion Care program, contact Mike Fields at 231-733-3530, or mfields@seniorresourceswmi.org.

Older Michigamians Day May 15

Older Michigamians Day is Wednesday, May 15, in Lansing. Look for photos on the Senior Resources Facebook page and in next month's Sixty Seconds!

Dementia Friends sessions

People with dementia sometimes need help going about their daily lives and to feel included in their communities. Dementia Friends works to give people an understanding of dementia, and the small things they can do to make a difference.

There are monthly Dementia Friends sessions offered in Muskegon, at Tanglewood Park, 560 Seminole Road, Norton Shores:

- May 9, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
- June 4, 10-11 a.m.
- July 15, 1-2 p.m.
- August 13, 3-4 p.m.
- September 24, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
- October 17, 9-10 a.m.
- November 18, 1-2 p.m.
- December 10, 3-4 p.m.

You can register for these, or future sessions: [https://www.eventbrite.com/d/mi--muskegon/dementia-friends/](https://www.eventbrite.com/d/mi--muskegon/dementia-friends/).
Term Care
Call: 231-733-3585
or Toll Free: 1-800-442-0054. In Oceana:
231-559-0331.

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