

Survey Response, OLLI Crowd Show “Village” Interest

by Carol Harrison

Aging in their own homes may become a little easier to do for North Coast residents next year.

That’s the goal of a grass roots effort to design and develop a local “village” to help people remain in their homes by accessing services that address the needs of aging.

About 80 people turned out Dec. 3 for the second of three introductory presentations about the “Village concept.”

“The turnout was fantastic, and it wasn’t just people coming for information,” said Maggie Kraft, executive director of Area 1 Agency on Aging and one of two presenters at the meeting. “Many signed up to be on our e-newsletter list and were ready to roll up their sleeves to help make this happen.”

Villages are consumer- and community-driven models. Through some combination of membership, staff and volunteering, they usually offer basic core services covered by a membership fee in addition to concierge services, community-building opportunities, and health and wellness services.

A1AA, Senior Action Coalition and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute partnered for the second of what will be six village conversations at Humboldt Bay Aquatic Center. It was part of OLLI’s brown-bag luncheon series.

The series resumes from 12 to 1:30 p.m. on Feb. 4 with a third village information session.

The series is free. OLLI membership is not required to attend.

“Are we too late? We’re playing catch up here,” said one woman who drove from Del Norte County.

No, Kraft said, noting that the village design would be up to her and others who begin to create a model in the months ahead.

Part of moving forward is analysis by county, region and demographics of the Northcoast at Home survey conducted by A1AA in the fall.

Kraft said the survey attracted 1,380 responses from people aged 29 to 102. Almost 74 percent said they would join a local village in the next 10 years.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents were aged 60 to 79.

Nearly 70 percent of respondents said they needed home maintenance professional services to continue living independently. Almost half identified computer help and more than a third described house or pet sitting and home modification as services of interest.

Cultural events topped the list of social, recreational and wellness activities with 56 percent citing an interest. Dance, exercise and weight training programs ranked second with 55 percent.

JoAnn Schuch of the Senior Action Coalition presented an overview of three successful village models: Village Friends Village Values in Auburn, AL; Monadnock Village in Jaffrey, N.H., and Share Care in Leelanau County, MI.

All three are nonprofit models. The first two formed in 2010 and 2011 and charge \$250 to \$450 a year for individual memberships and \$360 to \$600 for dual memberships in a single household. Some need-based discounts are provided.

The first two focused on core services such as technical support, home health, grocery shopping, transportation to appointments, vetted providers, and social visits.

Share Care attracted 400 enrollees in its first membership drive and has been stable for 20 years.

It offers a medical model that includes health care coordination and monitoring by registered nurses, access to services with a single call, and quality, pre-screened service providers. One-time enrollment fees went from \$100 for those under 60 and \$300 for those aged 60-75 to \$1,400 for those aged 85+.

Annual fees went from \$100 to \$300 and lump sum lifetime memberships were encouraged to create an endowed funding stream.

Schuch said 13 members of the Senior Action Coalition met as part of the SAC Village Support Group the day after the brown bag luncheon. It will work with A1AA and Redwood Community Action Agency on the behind-the-scenes prep necessary before the first volunteer work meeting targeted for late February.

Three months ago, SAC couldn't muster five votes to make the "Village" a working group, Schuch said,

Instead, SAC tasked Schuch to liaise with A1AA, which started in the spring to work with St. Joseph through a Care for the Poor grant and the McLean Foundation to put the village pieces together.

“Momentum is building,” Kraft said.

For more information about villages, go to vtvnetwork.org.

A1AA paid Carol Harrison to write this article.