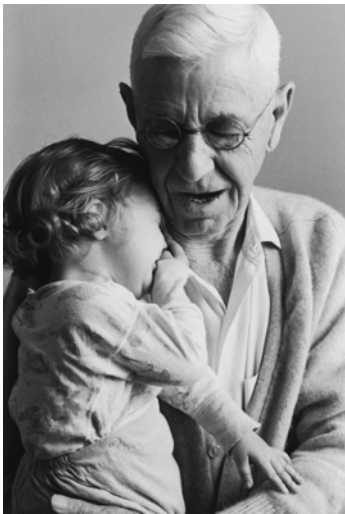




United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging

Blueprint for Action



A Report from the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging
June 2004

impact matters.

"No age has a monopoly on success. Any age is the right age to start doing!"
-- Author Unknown

Blueprint for Action

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“Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born.”
-- Dale E. Turner

"Every age has its beautiful moments."
-- Albert Einstein

Executive Summary

Overview

Based on an assessment of 70 interviews with local non-profit agency, business and community leaders, and some 1,200 older adult survey respondents, the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) created the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging (LVAA/the Alliance) in May 2001. LVAA's vision is the Lehigh Valley will be a community where older adults can remain in their homes and continue to live full lives with as much choice as possible. The mission is to advance strategies ensuring long-term care and supportive service systems meet the existing and emerging needs of all older adults.

Governance of the Alliance rests in a 22-person steering committee staffed by the United Way, which also acts as fiduciary agent. The LVAA maintains a current membership of more than 140, with an outstanding attendance and participation rate of 87% on all planning levels. Beyond the steering committee, remaining Alliance members participate on one or more of the five priority focus committees: Communications, Housing Options, Workforce Development, Mobility Options, and Intergenerational Opportunity. Consumers are equally represented on all planning levels.

As a result of an extensive community planning process that included 131 participants attending 33 meetings of priority focus committees, a community-wide Imagin-Aging Conference of more than 200 attendees, and a five-part summer conference series highlighting best-practices for implementation in each priority area, the following "Blue Print for Action" is presented for community review and comment.

This "Blueprint for Action" provides a synopsis of each conference, and identifies opportunities and barriers, actions for individuals and organizations, and actions for the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging to take in establishing a strategic plan for implementation in the Lehigh Valley.

Recommendations

Key recommendations that emerged from the conference series include:

- Secure a regional license to utilize **BenefitsCheckUp**: a confidential online service that has helped more than half a million seniors find federal and state assistance programs, and develop a community implementation plan that includes assisting seniors in both identifying and securing those services.
- Implement the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging web-based "Communications Network" for the purpose of creating a "virtual community" or "portal" through which ideas can be shared, communication can be encouraged, training

opportunities can be coordinated, and emerging issues can be discussed by professionals, volunteers, caregivers, and seniors.

- Serve as a local subcontractor of CARIE on the “Better Jobs, Better Care Project:” a demonstration project launched and supported by both The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and The Atlantic Philanthropies, to improve the recruitment and retention of quality direct care workers.
- Develop and implement the “Life Options Concept” in the Lehigh Valley to access meaningful and self-directed choices for work, service, lifelong learning and community connections that includes an emphasis on intergenerational opportunities.
- Continue to provide the leadership and serve as convener for the community to work together to address the gaps surrounding mobility, advance intergenerational opportunities, and improve housing options for older adults.

The Future

The Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, through its community building efforts, Imagin-Aging conferences and summer conference series, has built a climate of awareness regarding the needs and opportunities for older adults. This Blueprint for Action provides the “springboard” to action by providing critical community feedback upon which the Alliance can frame out and act upon a strategic plan for the future. The Alliance will take care to hold a community conference in 2004 to decide upon and adopt key indicators of success that will measure improvement in the lives of older adults on a community-wide level.

“Imagin-Aging: The Blueprint Has Been Drawn... the Framework Is Ready To Be Raised.”

Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging ***A Community Building Initiative of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley***

History

In 1994, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley began to chart a new direction for philanthropic investments – a direction that would transform the organization from a conduit, through which individuals, corporations, and private foundations could direct designations to member agencies, into a community builder, an organization committed to building collaborative partnerships that systemically address community problems.

In 2001, United Way demonstrated a shift in this direction with their commitment to provide the resources, human and financial, to establishment of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging (LVAA) in May of 2001. This shift was the result of more than 70 interviews with Lehigh Valley agency personnel, business and community representatives, and nearly 1,200 one-on-one surveys conducted with older adults at various “Senior Fairs” in Allentown and Bethlehem. Rather than create another non-profit organization, United Way Services, Inc., a subsidiary corporation of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, became the fiduciary home of the LVAA. This arrangement created the framework of neutrality needed to build a strong alliance – one that could focus its energies on convening and leading a strategic community planning process for meeting the emerging needs of our aging population through implementation of research-based, best practices for meeting these needs.

The Alliance is a valley-wide collaborative with more than 140 current and active volunteer members from all facets of the community who are working together to achieve a community-driven vision for our aging.

Guiding Principles

The Alliance conducts all work under the following “Guiding Principles,” adapted with permission from the Retirement Research Foundation:

We believe that caring communities:

- Engage older adults as active and integral contributors
- Promote community-wide involvement with and care for older adults
- Promote and support freedom of older adults to make life choices
- Support institutions that offer person-centered care
- Facilitate older adults’ access to services and opportunities
- Invest in the infrastructure of community organizations that sustain older adults.

Alliance Vision

The Lehigh Valley is a community in which older adults can remain in their homes and communities and continue to live full lives with as much choice as possible.

Alliance Mission

To advance community strategies designed to ensure that comprehensive long-term care and supportive service systems meet the existing and emerging needs of all older adults in our community.

Alliance Goals

To mobilize the Lehigh Valley region for the purpose of making the emerging issues, preferences, and options/opportunities for our vulnerable older adult population a public priority for planning and investment.

To develop a comprehensive, regional, long-range plan for improving the organization, access, and delivery of long-term care and supportive services for older adults.

To develop a regional networking, data collection/dissemination, and information sharing system for improving communication and resource development to be used by consumers, service providers, and community planning organizations.

Community Vision

All older adults in the Lehigh Valley will have the opportunity to age successfully.

Community Outcomes and Goal Statements

Outcome A: Older adults will age successfully.

Goal Statement: Older adults will utilize the physical, social, healthcare, and spiritual resources to age successfully.

Outcome B: Older adults will make informed, positive choices.

Goal Statement: Older adults will have the information and educational resources to help them choose wisely to ensure their confidence in the future.

Outcome C: Older adults will live where they choose for as long as they have the capacity to do so.

Goal Statement: Older adults will have person-centered support, mobility, and housing options to maximize their independence, wherever they live.

Outcome D: Older adults will live safely in supportive communities.

Goal Statement: The Lehigh Valley is a safe community where people live together, caring for each other in their daily activities.

Purpose

The focus of community planning efforts undertaken by the Alliance is to create the system shift, improvement, or reform necessary to promote healthy communities and lifestyles for our aging population. Toward this end, the Alliance has conducted a needs assessment of the aging in our community to establish the basis for planning. The assessment indicated that collectively local organizations and collaborative efforts have resulted in a broad spectrum of resources for our aging population. What quickly became evident to the Alliance partners was that, to a large degree, there were programs and supportive services to support successful aging in place as long as possible, but that the systems and community partnering organizations could be better aligned in order for seniors to take full advantage of the services and benefits.

Priority Issues

Members of the Alliance met for a six-month period in 2002 to identify priority issues, related to the four outcome statements, requiring attention for improving the systems that support our aging population. Five priority issues emerged and were studied, and the following preliminary recommendations have been made in accordance with each priority area. Additionally, one comprehensive recommendation was made that crosses all focus areas.

COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATION

Launch Integrated Communication Network: In collaboration with community organizations, launch a comprehensive, internet-based Lehigh Valley-wide communication network, including education and information resources, to help older adults and their families with decisions that enable the older adults to age successfully.

FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS

Eliminate Eldercare Worker Shortage: Recognize the value and contributions of older adults by developing and implementing a community model to educate, recruit and retain workers in the field of eldercare, including workforce preparation, maintenance of positive work environments, and equitable compensation.

Improve Housing Options for Older Adults: Implement a coordinated plan to provide a wider variety of safe, affordable, inclusive, and older adult-friendly housing options for older adults of all income levels.

“Age should not have its face lifted, but it should rather teach the world to admire wrinkles as the etchings of experience and the firm line of character.”

— Ralph B. Perry

Enhance Mobility Options for Older Adults: Involve the Lehigh Valley community (communities of faith, business, agencies, organizations and individuals) in developing and implementing innovative solutions to mobility issues for older adults regarding: 1) transporting older adults to and from the goods and services locations; 2) transporting goods and services to the older adults; and, 3) helping older adults access/obtain goods and services through the use of technology (e.g. mail, telephone, internet).

Enhance Intergenerational Opportunities Within Communities: Maintain and enhance the integrity of older adults by fostering positive relationships across generations utilizing asset-based approaches.

“The person who has lived the most is not the one with the most years but the one with the richest experiences.”

-- Jean Jacques Rousseau, Swiss Political Philosopher, Educationist, Essayist

Conference Series

After investing two years to craft a vision, mission, goals, and ultimate outcomes desired for our Lehigh Valley older adult community, and identifying “priority issues” that demand our immediate attention, the members of the Alliance spent another six months searching for “best practice strategies” that will make a difference in addressing these priority issues. The Alliance has hosted a conference series entitled “Changing Outcomes for Older Adults and their Families.” The series was designed to highlight the best practices and model strategies relevant to the five goals in use across the country. Each work group was then tasked to focus on actions that could make the recommendations a reality in the Lehigh Valley.

Blueprint for Action

The purpose of this “Blueprint” is to summarize the 2003 Conference Series, articulate the community response to date, and distribute it to the Lehigh Valley. For each session, a “Case for Action” Keynote Synopsis, and “Roundtable Summary” highlighting opportunities and barriers, and suggested actions for individuals, organizations, and the alliance is provided. The Alliance will use the “Blueprint” as a tool in planning actions that will achieve the greatest community impact.

The document is also a “Call for Action” to all organizations and individuals in the community who are committed to a vision of the Lehigh Valley as a community in which older adults can remain in their homes and communities and continue to live full lives with as much choice as possible. A valley-wide conference will be held to select indicators that will measure success in impacting community wide outcomes. For more information or to become actively involved in the Alliance, please contact Arlene Lund at arlenel@unitedwayglv.org or (610) 807-5721.

THIS BLUEPRINT IS NOT THE END, BUT THE BEGINNING!

CONFERENCE I

BenefitsCheckUp

“FACILITATING OLDER ADULTS’ ACCESS TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

It is estimated that there are at least 18,128 uncollected annual benefits among the 91,239 older adults 65 years of age and older in Northampton and Lehigh Counties. These uncollected benefits are valued annually at \$31,444,449 dollars that could allow older adults to remain in their homes and our community, while continuing to live full lives with as much choice as possible. Older adults face major obstacles in gaining access to local, state, and national benefits. The system to locate and obtain services is difficult to navigate. There is a lack of awareness about benefit programs; absence of a centralized location in which to apply for all assistance programs; different age, income, and asset criteria among assistance programs; lengthy and complex application forms; language barriers; and inadequate outreach efforts to inform people about programs and to assist them in applying. Service providers need a collaborative group for the sharing of information, resources, and data collection.

SYNOPSIS

Frank Slobig, of the National Council on Aging, gave the keynote address that focused on a best practice strategy, **BenefitsCheckUp: Organizational Edition**, an internet-based database of federal and state benefits. It is designed and frequently updated to support community-based organizations in helping older adults and their caregivers to access needed benefits. It works by enabling:

- Clients to receive a personal customized benefits report detailing their potential eligibility for various programs. The report summarizes each program, provides local contact information on where to apply, and includes many downloadable program applications.
- Communities to promote organizational system improvement by screening seniors in a consistent, efficient, and current manner.
- Organizations to assist older adults and their caregivers to complete a confidential questionnaire to learn about federal, state, local, and private benefits complete with organizational co-branding of programs, services.
- Local organizations to incorporate their benefits into the organizational edition.
- LVAA to generate statistical reports regarding eligibility, benefits, and local usage.
- The **BenefitsCheckUp: Organizational Edition** license would include the technical support from National Council on the Aging (NCOA).

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

BenefitsCheckUp

“FACILITATING OLDER ADULTS’ ACCESS TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

OPPORTUNITIES* AND BARRIERS to implementing a community-wide initiative regarding **BenefitsCheckUp** in the Lehigh Valley.

- Ability to improve the awareness and increase benefits to older adults in the community*
- Strength of a coordinated effort engaging the Alliance, community and faith organizations, volunteers and recipients of services*
- Collaboration of energy to obtain funding, in-kind services, need for staff, technical support, space and manpower*
- Capacity to reach full community through a variety of communication approaches: Inclusive and empowering of organizations and community*
- Possibility of encountering turf issues: What entity will manage this process? How many/which organizations will have access?

ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS so that the implementation of **BenefitsCheckUp** could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Participate in a collaborative process to develop, implement, and evaluate **BenefitsCheckUp**, eg. funding, participation commitments, educational workshops, distribution of materials, conducting surveys, connecting older adults to services, securing volunteers and marketing
- Contribute in the development of a set of valley-wide participation criteria to utilize the license.

ACTIONS FOR LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING so that the implementation of **BenefitsCheckUp** could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Establish role of lead organization responsible to staff, develop, implement, maintain, and evaluate a valley-wide plan of action for **BenefitsCheckUp**
- Purchase the license for **BenefitsCheckUp**
- Develop valley-wide participation criteria to utilize the license
- Monitor usage and evaluate the ongoing value to the community
- Maintain role of convener and community builder
- Pursue additional funds/grants to support the license
- Manage communications/publicity.

CONFERENCE II

Culture Change: Building the New Culture of Elderhood in America “SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER PERSON-CENTERED CARE BY PROMOTING COMMUNITY-WIDE INVOLVEMENT WITH AND CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS”

The recruitment and retention of direct care jobs in the long-term care continuum is a problem within the Lehigh Valley and across the state. In late fall of 2000, Pennsylvania had 11,300 direct care positions remaining vacant with 70% of providers reporting significant problems in recruiting new workers. The problem in the Lehigh Valley is even more serious resulting in 20% of our providers reporting service cuts! Current economic constraints have severely limited the ability to address the issues of recruitment and retention through significant increases in wages. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and The Atlantic Philanthropies recently announced strong support to implement innovative changes in policy and practice necessary for building a stable, high-quality workforce. Culture change, such as workforce preparation, maintenance of positive work environments, as well as equitable compensation, is needed to avoid an acute shortage of direct care workers who provide necessary care and support to older people.

SYNOPSIS

Approximately 50 members of the Lehigh Valley community participated in a full day conference in Philadelphia conducted by the American Society on Aging. Attendees gained vital new insights into how core values and principles regarding person-centered care can be placed into everyday practice and understand the key elements of a transformed culture. Participants gained a realistic view of the key factors impeding organizational transformation. Internal factors such as staff shortages, staff skill sets, leadership/management, governance, and physical plant are factors that can only be addressed through team development. Information from the Pennsylvania Intra-Governmental Council on Long Term Care was reviewed concurring the two most critical issues to be recruitment and retention of direct care workers. The Coalition for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) provided a news release of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and The Atlantic Philanthropies that announced they were the recipients of the “Better Jobs, Better Care” initiative seeking to improve the recruitment and retention of direct care workers. CARIE requested that LVAA consider applying to serve as a site for this demonstration project.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Culture Change: Building the New Culture of Elderhood in America “SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER PERSON-CENTERED CARE BY PROMOTING COMMUNITY-WIDE INVOLVEMENT WITH AND CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS”

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS* to implementing a community-wide initiative promoting “culture change” in the Lehigh Valley.

- Subcontracting opportunity with the “Better Jobs, Better Care” initiative*
- Strengthen participation in the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging*
- Wealth of vocational and secondary schools, colleges, and universities*
- Attractiveness of an improved-quality of life *
- Lack of knowledge on how to implement change
- Resistance to change, competition, turf-ism, money, time, resources
- Buy-in by practitioners/organizations in the field of long-term care.

ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS so that the implementation of a community-wide initiative promoting “culture change” could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Re-evaluate vision and mission statements of organization
- “Walk the talk” within the organization and share with other boards
- Participate in educational efforts and pilot innovative strategies
- Become part of the Alliance
- Participate in advocacy and efforts to increase public awareness
- Register direct care workers to vote.

ACTIONS FOR LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING so that the implementation of a community wide initiative promoting “Culture Change” could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Pursue the subcontractor opportunity regarding the Robert Wood Johnson “Better Jobs, Better Care” initiative with CARIE
- Find a way to advance advocacy efforts
- Continue in the role of convener – community builder
- Develop and implement marketing plan/public awareness plan
- Network with the PA Culture Change movement
- Secure new funding resources/redirection of resources for defined projects.

CONFERENCE III

Enhance Mobility Options for Older Adults

“INVESTING IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUSTAIN OLDER ADULTS”

The forecast for the future challenges us to look for ways to keep our older adults as mobile as possible. 83% of older adults want to age in place within age-diverse communities, with 52% of them wanting to live near green space. Since our public transportation system is limited largely to urban settings, innovative solutions are needed to mitigate the adverse effects of limited mobility. Lack of mobility restricts access to economic, social, and health care services, and reduces the ability for self-care. The economic impact associated with lack of mobility includes lost income, reduced employment opportunities, increased costs of delivering goods and services, increased costs of transport for medical care, and macro-economic losses due to decreased discretionary spending (shopping, cultural events, restaurants, and recreation). “Older populations significantly affect the demand, design, and delivery of transportation infrastructure and services.”

SYNOPSIS

The Mobility Committee invested months of effort exploring proven and measurable best practice strategies that would lead to the development and implementation of innovative solutions regarding mobility issues for the Lehigh Valley. The areas investigated included transporting older adults to sources of goods/services; transporting goods/services to older adults; and older adults using technology to obtain goods/services. Many communities had great ideas to offer, but lacked the ability to demonstrate or document their success. The conference provided the opportunity for speakers Joe McCoy of the AARP Driver Safety Program, Joan Posipanko of Meals on Wheels, Mike Keir of Wegmans, Marty Cottrell, Community Volunteer, Judi Pobuda, of Visual Impairment and Blindness Services of Northampton County, Joe Gurinko of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lynn Heiney of ShareCare, and Denis Meyers of Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) to:

- Establish a common understanding of what we mean by mobility.
- Identify the nature of the problem on a local level, and gain a perspective of population projections and their potential impact on the future.
- Explore some key approaches to older adult mobility.
- Stimulate the community’s input on best practice strategies in order to develop a plan of action for the Lehigh Valley.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Enhance Mobility Options for Older Adults

“INVESTING IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUSTAIN OLDER ADULTS”

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS* to addressing gaps in mobility services in the Lehigh Valley.

- Possibility of creating a central clearinghouse for general information and coordination of services*
- Need for quantifiable data regarding the availability of transportation in rural, suburban, and areas traditionally accessible only by automobiles*
- Opportunity to convene local planners and providers of services to discuss issues such as: location of handicap accessible parking, providing one-on-one transportation, cost of service, examine paperwork, applications for service, the involvement and coordination of taxi/limo services, addressing consumer concerns regarding home-to-vehicle assistance, and criteria for door-to-door service*
- Interest to increase awareness, availability, and accessibility of services*
- New technology approaches to addressing mobility*
- Level of interest of those involved in the scheduling of medical appointments and social opportunities to assess feasibility of coordinated scheduling
- Cultural resistance to mobility assistance.

ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS so the gaps in mobility can be addressed in the Lehigh Valley.

- Research transportation availability in rural, suburban, and areas traditionally accessible only by automobiles
- Assess those involved in the scheduling of medical appointments and social opportunities to determine feasibility of coordinated scheduling
- Review the possibility of a central clearinghouse for general information and the coordination of services
- Look into the viability of a publicity campaign
- Investigate the latest technology approaches to addressing mobility
- Address cultural resistance to mobility assistance.

ACTIONS FOR LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING so that the gaps in mobility can be addressed in the Lehigh Valley.

- Provide the leadership, serve as convener for the community to continue working together and create the plan for addressing gaps in mobility.

CONFERENCE IV

The Life Options Concept “A NEW LIFE STAGE BEYOND MIDLIFE”

We are in the midst of a demographic revolution. Over the last century, the older population (65+) has increased from 3 million in 1990 to 35 million in 2000. By 2030, there will be approximately 70 million people over age 65, with the 85+ populations growing faster than any other age group.

This trend is having a significant impact on the nature of age relations, our vision of retirement, and the ability of families and health/social service organizations to meet the needs of individuals throughout their lives.

Dr. Nancy Henkin, Executive Director of Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning, stressed, “A longer life span means that more older adults will be seeking an array of volunteer, employment, and educational opportunities to enhance the quality of this stage of life.”

SYNOPSIS

Judy Goggin, Senior Vice President for Civic Ventures, a non-profit organization working to expand the social contributions of older Americans to society and to transform the aging of American society into a source of individual and social renewal, gave the keynote address. It focused on a concept to address how older adults make the transition to a new life stage... toward 25 to 30 years of healthy, active living traditionally called “The Retirement Years”... by being provided access to meaningful and self-directed choices for work, service, lifelong learning, and community connections, that includes an emphasis on intergenerational opportunities.

Civic Ventures developed the concept based on the belief that:

- Social renewal through civic engagement will bring significant benefits to both individuals and society.
- Individuals will be happier and healthier when they integrate significant community engagement as part of a full life plan.
- The image of aging itself will be improved by increased participation in activities that foster both individual and social renewal.

The Life Options approach requires a positive attitude about aging, a willingness to change how people think and speak about this population, the ability to go beyond one’s own organization to create new community partnerships, inclusive of intergenerational opportunities, and a belief that this generation can create what it wants in an alliance with others.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

The Life Options Concept *“A NEW LIFE STAGE BEYOND MIDLIFE”*

OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES that exist in the Lehigh Valley for each of the core elements of the Life Options Concept.

- Life Planning: Senior Centers, PA Bar Association, “Guide to Living Trusts,” Elder Law attorneys, Retirement planners
- Meaningful Opportunities For Civic Engagement: Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley, RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Faith-Based Communities, Schools, Civic Organizations
- Lifelong Learning for Careers and Enrichment: Senior Centers, Colleges and Universities: Public, Private, and Community Colleges, American Association of Retired Persons, Private Industry Council/Career Link
- Places and Programs for Making Community Connections: Senior, Health, Historical, and Cultural Centers, Local Businesses, Social Service Organizations, Faith-Based Communities, Libraries
- Assistance with Information and Resources: Broad-based listing.

ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS to identify and reach the target audience for Life Options beyond those who are currently served by our senior services.

- Form focus groups where people congregate
- Research existing Life Option Programs
- Include older adults in the planning process
- Publicize the benefits of the Life Options Concept
- Address the issue of “name.” People do not care to be referred to as “Older Adults/Seniors.”

ACTIONS FOR LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING so that the implementation of core elements of the Life Options Concept could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Develop/guide the strategic plan for this initiative
- Utilize the Intergenerational subcommittee to advise/steer the implementation process
- Facilitate/coordinate the media efforts inclusive of market saturation regarding both attitudes toward older adults and the Life Options Concept.

CONFERENCE V

Home Modification, Universal Design, & Visitability

“PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING FREEDOM OF OLDER ADULTS TO MAKE LIFE CHOICES”

Developing a coordinated plan to provide a wider variety of safe, affordable, inclusive, and older adult-friendly housing options is being demanded by persons of all income levels. The planning process needs to include, among others, community planners, home and facility developers, housing providers, and contractors with a focus on affordable choices, elder friendly housing, and an elder certification process for contractors. Practices such as home modification, universal design, and preparing homes for “visitability” are currently being examined as ways to create an environment that supports aging in place.

Our aging population drives the demand for these practices. On a state level, this age group represents the fastest growing group of people in PA, up 38% alone in the past 10 years. When we zero in closer at Lehigh and Northampton Counties, the growth rate experienced in the 85 and older category is 53% and 68% respectively, significantly exceeding the state average by 17%. And, if we look at the full Lehigh Valley population over age 65, we find that this percent of people is 15.75%. There is an estimated 91,239 older adults 65 years of age and older in Lehigh & Northampton Counties alone.

SYNOPSIS

Our keynote speaker was Susan Klein of the Philadelphia Corporation of Aging (PCA). She has been with the PCA since 1977 and has served as Director of Housing since 1990. Susan addressed how the environment, incorporating the best practice strategies of home modification, universal design, and visitability, could support aging in place. Preceding her remarks, background information was provided regarding these strategies from the Morton Kesten Summit on Home Modification and The Center for Universal Design (1997): North Carolina State University. These remarks and personal reflections were shared by local speakers Barbara Fraust, Realtor, Re/Max 100 Real Estate; Robyn L. Oplinger, Advocate, The Arc of Lehigh and Northampton Counties; Kathy Garcsar, Employer of Record Coordinator for Lehigh & Northampton Counties & Family Support Services Coordinator for The Arc of Northampton County; and, Barbara Kling, Director of Housing, VIA of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. This material greatly aided in defining the three best practices, highlighting their importance, and describing challenges to implementation facing both consumers and those in private industry.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Home Modification, Universal Design, & Visitability

“PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING FREEDOM OF OLDER ADULTS TO MAKE LIFE CHOICES”

OPPORTUNITIES and BARRIERS* to implementing a coordinated plan that includes best practice strategies such as home modification, universal design, and visitability in the Lehigh Valley.

- Capacity of the LVAA to convene parties around this issue*
- Develop educational workshops for builders, contractors, etc.*
- Keep older adults at home and in communities safely*
- Coordinate public awareness with existing community events*
- Lack of equity, and inadequacy, instability, and organizational impediments of funding sources
- Communication of information; complicated by language barriers
- Regulatory/Building Codes
- Lack of involvement by contractors, building associations, educators, etc.
- Problems with consumer acceptance
- Need for advocacy, standardization, and consensus
- Legal issues for renters.

ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS so that the implementation of a coordinated plan could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Participate in a public awareness and education campaign
- Advocate for effective legislation
- Provide services that support this agenda
- Engage others in the efforts of the Housing Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging to develop a realistic “plan of action.”

ACTIONS FOR LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING so that the implementation of a coordinated plan could be a success in the Lehigh Valley.

- Continue to convene the community around this issue
- Develop a public awareness plan that includes written and web-based materials, radio, TV and newspaper, marketing home tours, home shows, Senior Fest, and a mobile community display: Link with **BenefitsCheckUp**
- Look for venues for public advocacy
- Explore, through the United Way campaign, interest in targeted giving from those in the Builders Association, businesses, and trades unions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONFERENCE I: *BenefitsCheckUp*

“FACILITATING OLDER ADULTS’ ACCESS TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

Recommendation # 1

The Communications Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging believes that by securing a regional license to utilize this service, and by developing a community implementation plan that includes assisting seniors in both identifying and securing those services, we could move a step closer to attaining the vision of the LVAA - a vision that the Lehigh Valley could be a region in which older adults can remain in their homes and communities and continue to live full lives with as much choice as possible.

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley would be approached to secure, for the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, an organizational regional license with unlimited site-based licenses from the National Council On Aging (NCOA) for **BenefitsCheckUp**: a confidential online service that has helped more than half a million seniors find federal and state assistance programs. More than 1,000 federal, state, local, and private benefit programs are maintained within this system. They include: Prescription Assistance (some 250 public and private Patient Assistance and Prescription Savings programs), Health Care Programs, Nutrition Programs, Property Tax Programs, and Veterans, Housing, and Financial Assistance. It is expected that NCOA would integrate the impact of the expanded Medicare prescription drug benefit on federal and state entitlements in the database.

The Communications Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, in conjunction with United Way, would oversee and guide this initiative. Unlimited site licenses would be issued to agencies and organizations within both Lehigh and Northampton Counties. An implementation strategy would include requirements that participating agencies would agree to in terms of expected numbers of individuals to be screened and followed up on and criteria to be met in implementing **BenefitsCheckUp**.

Recommendation #2

The Communications Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging supports the implementation of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging web-based “Communications Network” for the purpose of creating a “virtual community” or “portal” through which ideas can be shared, communication can be encouraged, training opportunities can be coordinated, and emerging issues can be discussed by professionals, volunteers, caregivers, and seniors.

This network will include an intranet site with links to more than 200 groups affiliated with the Alliance on Aging, an interactive calendar with e-mail capability to menu groups for notification and updated listings, a professional development and training opportunities page, a FAQ page, and a message board.

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley has submitted and secured a grant from The Verizon Foundation to support this project of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging. A subcommittee of the Alliance would be formed to steer this process.

CONFERENCE II: Culture Change: Building the New Culture of Elderhood in America

“SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER PERSON-CENTERED CARE BY PROMOTING COMMUNITY-WIDE INVOLVEMENT WITH AND CARE FOR OLDER ADULTS”

Recommendation #3

The Workforce Development Committee recommends that, on behalf of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley serve as a local subcontractor of CARIE on the “Better Jobs, Better Care” initiative, a demonstration project launched and supported by both The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and The Atlantic Philanthropies. The goal of the program is to improve the recruitment and retention of quality direct care workers – nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care attendants – who provide necessary care and support to elderly people with chronic diseases or disabilities. Currently, there are no proven best practice strategies to address this issue on a national level. Through this demonstration project, it is anticipated that innovative strategies will be developed that will ultimately serve as a national model. Over the next three years, the Lehigh Valley would be on the cutting edge of implementing innovative changes in policy and practice necessary for building a stable, high-quality workforce which currently suffers from difficulties with recruitment of new workers, high turnover, and worker shortages.

CONFERENCE III: Enhance Mobility Options for Older Adults

“INVESTING IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUSTAIN OLDER ADULTS”

Recommendation #4

The Mobility Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance continues to provide the leadership and serve as convener for the community to work together to address the gaps surrounding mobility.

CONFERENCE IV: The Life Options Concept

“A NEW LIFE STAGE BEYOND MIDLIFE”

Recommendation # 5

The Intergenerational Opportunities Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging recommends that the Life Options Concept be developed and implemented in the Lehigh Valley to access meaningful and self-directed choices for work, service, lifelong learning, and community connections that includes an emphasis on intergenerational opportunities. To pilot this project, it is recommended that:

- The Intergenerational Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, in conjunction with identified partners, develop/guide the strategic plan and implementation for this project.
- The Intergenerational Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging in conjunction with United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley facilitate/coordinate the media efforts inclusive of market saturation regarding both attitudes toward older adults and the Life Options Concept.
- The Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging approach United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley to provide staff, volunteers, and initial resources to work with a select number of senior centers.
- The Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging approach United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley to secure Judy Goggin, Vice President of Civic Ventures, as a consultant for this project.

Recommendation # 6

The Intergenerational Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance continues to convene the community around the issue of advancing intergenerational opportunities.

CONFERENCE V: Home Modification, Universal Design, & Visitability “PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING FREEDOM OF OLDER ADULTS TO MAKE LIFE CHOICES”

Recommendation #7

The Housing Options Committee of the Lehigh Valley Alliance continues to convene the community around the issue of improving housing options for older adults, specifically to:

- Look at the feasibility and interest in developing a public awareness plan that includes written and web-based materials, radio, TV and newspaper marketing, home tours, home shows, and a mobile community display to promote home modification, universal design, and visitability.
- Explore public advocacy in this regard.
- Through the United Way campaign, investigate interest in targeting giving from within the Builders Association, businesses, and trades unions toward this specific activity.
- Involve local architects, homebuilder and re-modeler associations in exploring opportunities to credibly serve the home modifications, universal design and visitability needs of Lehigh Valley older adults.

THE FUTURE

The Lehigh Valley Alliance on Aging, through its community building efforts and conference series, has built a climate of awareness regarding the needs and opportunities for older adults. This Blueprint for Action provides the “springboard” to action by providing critical community feedback upon which the Alliance can frame out and act upon a strategic plan for the future. The Alliance will take care to hold a community conference in 2004 to decide upon and adopt key indicators of success that will measure improvement in the lives of older adults on a community-wide level.

“Grow old with me... the best is yet to come.”
Robert Browning

CONFERENCE SPONSORS

The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust
Easton Hospital
Lehigh County Office of Aging and Adult Services
Lehigh Valley Hospital & Health Network
NASW-PA Chapter
Northampton County Area Agency on Aging
St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING: COMMITTEES

Communication Committee

Launch Integrated Communication Network

Henry Acres, President, PA CLIN & LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor
Pamela Bechtel, Executive Director, Meals on Wheels of Lehigh County
Sarina Berlow, Allentown Jewish Community Center
Adele Bon-Shannon, VNA of St. Luke's Hospital
Paul Braden, Pastor, Salem Lutheran Church and LVAA Steering Committee Member
Velma Carter-Dryer, PA Council on Aging, PA Dept. of Aging
Victoria Coyle, Executive Director, North Penn Legal Services.
Rick Daugherty, Executive Director, Lehigh County Senior Center
Dan Dillard, Executive Director, Burn Prevention Foundation
Ann Drescher, Legg Mason and Committee Chair
Thomas Emmerth, Community Volunteer
Mahpareh Fakhraie, YWCA of Bethlehem
Linda Fields, LSW, Care Manager, Lehigh County Area Agency on Aging
Mona Finnigan, Griswold Special Care
Charles Fletcher, Community Volunteer
Casey Garrett, Family and Counseling Services of the Lehigh Valley
Belinda Gordon, President, Homewatch Caregivers
Jane Hudreck, Lehigh Valley Branch Office Coordinator, The Alzheimer's Association
Elizabeth Jensen, Moravian Hall Square
Thomas Mazur, Financial Planning Services
Ken McGeary, Regional Director of Continuing Education and Outreach, Penn State University & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Cordelia Miller, American Red Cross of the Greater Lehigh Valley
Donna Miller, DO, Medical Director, St. Luke's Hospital Geriatrics Institute, & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Joseph Napolitano, Program Officer, The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust and LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor

Pat Nemetch, APRN Caring Solutions for Seniors and Families, Nexus for Geriatric Planning, Inc., Board, LVAA Steering Committee Member
Diane Nolan, Lehigh County Senior Center
Meredith Okenquist, Program Assistant, The Alzheimer's Association
Freda Rafes, Crime Victims Council
Edward Roberts, Jr., Director Geriatric Services, Lehigh Valley Hospital Geriatric Center
Mary Elizabeth Roth, MD
Joan Schmehl, NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) of the Lehigh Valley
Diane Schrameyer, Project Director, RSVP – Retired and Senior Volunteer Program & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Bernie Schwartz, Geriatric Social Worker-Private Practice
Peter Schweyer, Senator Lisa Boscola's Office
Carol Smith Lewis, Valley Wide Help of American Red Cross of the Greater Lehigh Valley
Sally Schoffstall, Attorney at Law & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Judith Stanczak, Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services
George Treisner, Jr., Committee Chair, PSEA and member of United Way's Board of Directors
Terry Weber, Manager, Griswold Special Care
Frances Zamiskie, Saucon Valley Community Center

Workforce Development Committee
Eliminate Eldercare Worker Shortage

Ron Achey, Vice President, Labor and AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
Kellie Atkinson, Third Street Alliance for Women & Children
Bill Bartle, Executive Director, L.V. Business Education Partnership
Richard Baumann, Community Volunteer
Donna Buhosky, VNA of St. Lukes Hospital
Kathleen Cohen, Coordinator, Adult Day Care, Career Institute of Technology
Nancy Dischinat, Executive Director, Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
Gary Fedorcha, Lehigh Career and Technical Institute
Lisa Fichera, Phoebe Ministries
Casey Garrett, Family and Counseling Services of the Lehigh Valley,
Leander Hall, Community Volunteer
Terry Jones, Angel Helpers Living Assistance Services
Elizabeth Kane, Dean of Educational Development, Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School
Carolyn Kern, Northampton Community College
Nancy Kohn, Director, Employment and Organizational Development, Good Shepherd
Diane Lewis, Penn State Lehigh Valley Campus
John Mehler, Director, Northampton County Area Agency on Aging & LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor

Donna Miller, DO, Medical Director, St. Lukes Hospital - Geriatrics Institute, & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Kelly O'Shea Carney, PhD., CMC., Eldercare Assessment
Maureen Sawyer, Director, Case Management, Lehigh Valley Hospital - Muhlenberg
John Schantz, Senior location Services, Patt White Relocation Group
Bernie Schwartz, Geriatric Social Worker-Private Practice
Toni Sweitzer, Clinical Director, Advantage Home Care
Mary Ann Villanti, Home Instead Senior Care of the Lehigh Valley, Committee Chair
Rodney Wells, President and CEO, Phoebe Ministries

Mobility Options Committee
Enhance Mobility Options for Older Adults

Jamila Bookwala, Ph.D., Psychology Department, Lafayette College
Marty Cottrell, Community Volunteer & LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor
Wells Gow, Community Volunteer
Lynn Marie Heiney, Executive Director, ShareCare and Committee Co-Chair
Gayle Howland, Healthcheck
Steven C. Hummel, Executive Director, Valley Association for Specialized Transportation
Jacqueline McHale, Community Volunteer
Marlene Merz, Community Volunteer
Denis Meyers, Assistant Executive Director, Development, LANTA, & LVAA Steering Committee Member
Charles Palmeri, VP of Business Development, Easton Coach Company
Judith Pobuda, Executive Director, Visual Impairment and Blindness Services of Northampton County, and Committee Co-Chair
Rhissa Pontrelli, Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Lehigh County
Joan Posipanko, Executive Director, Meals on Wheels of Northampton County/ Bethlehem Area, Inc.
Brenda Sanderson, Community Volunteer & LVAA Steering Committee Member

Intergenerational Opportunity Committee
Enhance Intergenerational Opportunities within Communities

Betty Anton, DVS, Director Volunteer Services, Lehigh Valley Hospital
Lois Fuini, Interim Co-Executive Director, Allentown YMCA and YWCA
Debra Geiger, Community Volunteer
Karen Grady, Executive Director, The Arc of Lehigh and Northampton Counties
Fran Iannaccone, RN, CRRN, Director of Nursing, Good Shepherd Home – Conrad Walker Center
Nancy Kanuck, Director of Community Health, VNA of St. Luke's Hospital
Natalie Maier, Community Development Associate, Gateway Health Plan & Committee Chair
Georgann Miller, Community Volunteer & LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor

Marilyn Morales, Casework Supervisor, Visual Impairment and Blindness Services
Virginia Peters, Community Volunteer
Edward Ryan, Director of Community Relations, Center for Healthy Aging, Lehigh Valley Hospital
Diane Schrameyer, Director, RSVP & LVAA Steering Committee Member and Committee Advisor
Jane Trotter, Director of Programs, Volunteer Center
Miki Weaver, Program Director, Senior Centers of Bethlehem
Terry Weber, Manager, Griswold Special Care
Amelia Zemba, CBS/CEF Coordinator, VIA

Housing Options Committee
Improve Housing Options for Older Adults

Barbara Fraust, Realtor, Re/MAX 100 Real Estate
Otto Ehram, Community Volunteer
Ron Heckman, Director, Northampton County Human Services Committee Chair
Dale Honig, Marketing Director, Westminster Village - Allentown
Vicki Jackson, Executive Director, Senior Centers of Bethlehem
Mary Jo Ludivico, Program Manager, VNA of St. Luke's Hospital
Bob Sipos, Administrator, B'Nai B'rith Apartments

Staff

Bruce Frederick
Administrative Assistant for LVAA
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Arlene Lund
Director of Community Impact
Lead Staff "Generations" Older Adults Living Life to the Fullest
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

LEHIGH VALLEY ALLIANCE ON AGING SUMMER CONFERENCE SERIES

Speakers

Judy Goggin
Joe Gurinko
William Keane
Susan Klein
Frank Slobig
William Thomas
Kathy Garcsar
Lynn Heiney
Cora Hook
Barbara Kling
Denis Meyers
Robyn Oplinger
Virginia Peters
Judi Pobuda
Loretta Poczak
Kadi Tarlecky

Panelists

Paul Braden
Marty Cottrell
Robin Flores
Barbara Fraust
Mike Keir
Joe McCoy
John Mehler
Patricia Nichini
Joan Posipanko
Diane Schrameyer

Facilitators

Pam Boyer
Ann Drescher
Bruce Frederick
Helen Kelleher
Natalie Maier
Patricia Nemetich
George Treisner
Mary Ann Villanti

Participants

Ron Achey
Henry Acres
Betty Anton
Kelly Atkinson
Donna Bartos
Pam Bechtel
Sarina Berlow

Adele Bon-Shannon
Beth Boyer
Pam Boyer
Paul Braden
Jody Brown
Laura Caicedo
Kelly Carney
Peter Carpino
Velma Carter-Dryer
Marty Cottrell
Michael Crum
Rick Daugherty
Kathryn DeFrain
Ann Drescher
Otto Ehram
Thomas Emmerth
Mahpareh Fakhraie
Lisa Fichera
Linda Fields
Mona Finnegan
John Flenner
Robin A. Flores
John Ford
Christine Foy
Barbara Fraust
Bruce Frederick
Kathy Garcsar
Casey Garrett
Debra Geiger
Mary Ann Gibbons
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Karen Grady
Mari-Cay Hartman
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Delores Hencheck
Bruce Hill
Diana Hill
Sue Hoffman
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Gayle Howland
Frances Iannaccone
Vickie Jackson
Liz Jensen
Terry Jones
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Jacqueline McHale
John R. Mehler
Denis Meyers
Cordelia Miller
Donna Miller
Marilyn Morales
Sue Morettri
Joseph Napolitano
Patricia Nemetich
Rob Nicoletta
Diane Nolan
Jodi Olshevski
Virginia Peters
Judi Pobuda
Rhissa Pontrelli
Joan Posipanko
Sr. Louise Quinn
Kathleen Robinson
Anne Rogers
Russ Roper
Juliet Rothrock
Shari Ruggiero
Ed Ryan
Francis Salerno
Eben Sales
Brenda Sanderson
Maureen Sawyer
John Schantz
Karen Schiavone
Joan Schmeahl
Sally Schoffstall
Diane Schrameyer
Peter Schweyer
Joanne Scotchlus
Sue Shafer
Judith Stanczak
Roxanne Strohl
George Treisner
Jane Trotter
Peggy Vaquiro
Angela Velasquez
Mary Ann Villanti
Miki Weaver
Terry Weber
George White
Ed Wilson
Fran Zamiskie

"There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lived of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age."
-- Sophia Loren

Steering Committee

George Treisner, Jr., Chair, PSEA and member of United Way's Board of Directors

Pam Boyer, Co-chair, Rodale, Inc.

Francis Salerno, M.D., Co-chair, Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network

Henry Acres, PA CLIN

Harold Basseches, Community Volunteer

Jamila Bookwala, Ph.D., Lafayette College

Debbie Borse, Easton Hospital

Paul Braden, Salem Lutheran Church

Marty Cottrell, Community Volunteer

Robin Flores, Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services

Mary Ann Gibbons, Sacred Heart Hospital-Parish Nursing

Helen Kelleher, Catholic Social Services

Dr. R. Terry Martin, Sacred Heart Family Practice Residency Program

Ken McGeary, The Pennsylvania State University

John Mehler, Northampton County Area Agency on Aging

Denis Meyers, LANTA

Donna Miller, D.O., St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network

Georgann Miller, Community Volunteer

Joseph Napolitano, The Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust

Pat Nemetch, NEXUS

Gary Posch, People Rental

Edward Roberts, Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network

Brenda Sanderson, Community Volunteer

Sally Schoffstall, Esq., Attorney at Law

Diane Schrameyer, RSVP

Arlene Lund, Staff, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
2200 Avenue A
Bethlehem, PA 18017-2189
610-758-8010
www.unitedwayglv.org

impact matters.