

Community Engagement Report

Your Organization/Affiliation: Foster Grandparents	Your Name and Email: Moderator – Betsy Strahin strahin.betsy@countyofdane.com
Community Engagement Activity: <input type="checkbox"/> Community Forum or Listening Session – virtual or in person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus Group Discussions – virtual or in person <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Interviews – by phone or in person <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Live or Social Media Virtual Event <input type="checkbox"/> Paper or Internet Survey <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe): _____	
Date/s of Event or Effort: 7/21/2021	Number of Participants or Respondents: 13
Key Issues Discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From your personal experiences, what the main issues, problems, and challenges adults age 60 and older are facing in Dane County? - How can Dane County Support older adults in remaining independent for as long as possible? - What does Dane County have to change to be closer to your ideal community to age in? / What do you appreciate most about what Dane County already provides? 	
Background: “foster grandparents” are volunteers that work in the Dane County schools – they are not foster parents raising grandchildren	
Key Takeaways/Findings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing and transportation are very important to this group. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Housing is a challenge in Madison, the market is for rich, young professionals b. The waitlists for affordable housing is “insane,” especially for one bedrooms c. Rent has gone up extraordinarily with changes to Section 8 housing d. Know some friends who have moved to rural areas to afford housing, but they are not happy by the lack of services (such as doctors) in rural areas and are trying to stay in Madison as long as possible. e. Need: More access to affordable housing in Madison, cut back on waitlists, predictable rent 2. Transportation to and from medical appointments is challenging <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. They used to rely on MTM to get to medical appointments but are having bad experiences. In the past they were great, but now they are stranding people. Dropping them off at appointments and not coming back to bring them home. They are forced to take the bus or walk home as regular cabs are too expensive. b. Some have switched to taking Paratransit to their appointments. They know the cost of their trip (\$6.50), can book a ticket in advance, do not get stranded, and are asked about picking up more people in their trip (typically 3-4 people in one trip). c. Need: reliable round-trip transportation 	

3. COVID-19 continues to create fear in these seniors. During the lockdown, they were confined to their building and had to wear double masks when they went out. Now they are fearful that there are pockets of the population not getting shots while variants (Delta) are spreading.
 - a. **Need:** Health literacy for all. Choices of younger populations affect the older populations.
4. COVID also revealed some things they would like to continue.
 - a. They enjoyed help around their home. During the height of the pandemic volunteers were helping people in senior apartments clean 1-2 times per week. Now they use caseworkers to find cleaning help (about \$100/month). They miss the volunteers.
 - b. Access to food is an important issue for seniors. This group mentioned how much they like Goodman because of the food pantry – it has a lot choices including organic food and fresh produce, they also really like that they choose the food rather than being given a box of food without a say of what is in it. It makes them feel listened to. COVID saw a rise in home delivered groceries, they liked that and hope it will continue either as is or as an expansion of Meals on Wheels. If there's a way to still pick out the food, even better!
5. They also mention tech, better access to care providers, respite, and making new friends as need areas.
 - a. Tech was a sticking area that was hard to get help with recently. Many are relying on their families to help them learn new technologies. Others are “on a first name basis with tech support.” Some can use libraries to access tech and get help with it, but for others who use it more frequently or in-depth for work, the library is inconvenient. Getting in-home computer support would be ideal.
 - b. In-home aids are hard to find (CNA's) – believe this is because they are not paid a living wage. This is especially concerning as many seniors are living alone and have less family to take care of them when needed. In addition to smaller family sizes (less people to ask for help), families are more spread out – sometimes coast to coast. When considering moving to be closer to their children, it isn't always possible. The children may be living in expensive cities that these retirees cannot afford.
 - c. Respite is need for people taking of others, it is a 24/7 job to care for an aging person.
 - d. As heard in other groups it is hard to make friends as an adult. Having more and smaller events would help them get to know each other and make more friends. Interest in this cross cultures and generations.
6. This group was well versed in resources available for seniors. Naming senior centers, the ADRC, RSVP and many other services. They talked specifically about NewBridge Senior Center and some activities they had enjoyed there and would like to enjoy again – including painting classes and gym/exercise passes.
7. In addition to knowing local resources, they provided examples from other places about how they help their aging
 - a. Jamaica – families keep their parents at home as they age. They also focus on holistic, natural health care. Pharmacies are like a gathering place where they can share knowledge and remedies.
 - b. Germany – has total health care, their seniors are not going broke to afford health care. Cost of care in the US is so high people may put off going to providers, which makes the situation worse (urgent) when they do finally go in.

- c. Illinois – during COVID they assigned “advocates” to identify, broker and connect people to resources they needed in the moment. They also served as someone to talk to, who was checking in on them, and helping to relieve stress.
- d. A final idea that came up was the integrated safety providers – connecting social services with police, fire, EMTs, etc. Creating opportunity to serve the community not only in crisis/times of danger, but to work as a neighborhood watch and creating thriving communities with trust between residents and emergency responders.

Planned Response:

Share this form with AAA of Dane County to inform the drafting of their 2022-2024 strategic plan.