

## **SHARON COUNCIL ON AGING ANNUAL REPORT FOR ELDER AFFAIRS FY 2009**

**FACILITY & ADULT CENTER:** While despairing about the economy both nationally and locally, we were nevertheless able to maintain and even grow our programs and services at the Sharon Adult Center during FY09. New and ongoing activities and special events were often low cost or free or offered scholarships for those in need, and slowly but surely more and more residents began to take "ownership" of "their" center. Some elders and non-elders alike established "routines," some bringing lunch in with them on and staying the day with friends, some caring for the garden and finishing off the afternoon with a game of cards, some enjoying a "continental breakfast" of donated pastries, coffee or tea, checking their email and chatting with friends. Groups came in, availed themselves of the kitchen to set up their own coffee and dessert and spent the afternoon socializing and playing board games or billiards, or in an art class. Helping establish and observing these developments has brought great satisfaction to the staff, board, volunteers, and residents themselves, as well as the selectmen and town administrator and Finance Committee - many indicating that they actually felt good about paying their taxes when they experienced the results of the renovation of the Sharon Community Center and the establishment of the Adult Center and all that goes on here!

**PROGRAMS:** This year new programs were added and/or held in partnership with other departments or organizations. The South Shore premiere of the documentary film, "I Refused to Die," was shown in collaboration with the Recreation Department in a room that allowed 150 viewers to attend this important program. One Book, One Town was held in partnership with the library; "Show & Tell: Communicating Across the Generations/Do You Know how to Twitter?" was a successful six-week partnership with the Sharon Middle School. The Lakeside Gallery partnered with the Sharon Creative Arts Association and the high school for intergenerational and professional exhibits as well as holding a Community Exhibit. An Open Mic Night, in conjunction with a Sharon High School art exhibit in our gallery, brought in well over 100 students, the high school principal and a number of high school teachers of art and music for a truly fun and memorable evening! The results were "totally awesome," and fascinated, inspired, or "rocked" all adults and teens that were fortunate enough to be present! Our Chinese social and lunch program continued to attract 35 or more elders. Our Vision Support Group now includes approximately 24 members.

Many more programs were added with the help of an enthusiastic Program Committee and our Program Coordinator and all staff. As well, a survey went out to those seeking evening programming to open up opportunities for those who still work following numerous emails and calls from the working population. Following this, we held a brainstorming session and several evening programs will be tried out in FY10!

**ADVOCACY:** State Representative Louis L. Kafka received the 2nd Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) Health Care Leadership Award at the Sharon Adult Center. As well, Representative Kafka and Senators Joyce and Timilty all supported or proposed legislation including property tax relief and increases for the Councils on Aging through the state's Formula Grant.

A working group consisting of the COA Director and a former member of the town's Planning Board, the town's Building Inspector and a member of the Zoning Board, helped develop a packet of materials that will be finalized in FY10 and should enable families and seniors seeking to establish accessory housing units to find their way more easily through a complex and sometimes frustrating set of regulations and bylaws.

The COA Director, as board member on the MCOA Executive Committee, worked with MCOA to advocate for an increase in the Formula Grant in FY09 and was successful, thanks to the understanding and acknowledgment of the important work being done by COAs around the state. We sent thanks to our legislators and the Governor for their support for this vital measure. Our Director also continued as co-chair of the MCOA Property Tax Relief Task Force which was recently learned that Senator Cynthia Creem's amendment to the Governor's budget was approved, allowing an increase in the work-off program (by local option) to \$1000. The COA Social Worker joined NASW's Elder Affairs Committee to advocate for the mental health needs of elders.

**GRANTS:** In addition to the state Formula Grant, the COA was awarded another Sharon Cultural Council Grant, a MArtap Mini-Grant, and a grant from Eastern Bank to help support our Community Wellness Series. Stop & Shop provided funds for our patio furniture. We continued to maintain our relationship with Salvation Army, the organization that provides help with food vouchers and some payments for utility/other bills. Temple Sinai provided gift cards for the needy, and Sharon's Gifts of Hope program provided support to the needy as well, especially around the holidays. Many local vendors provided raffle prizes for the Friends of the Sharon COA and vendors also contributed in kind help, such as Crescent Ridge Dairy, French Memories, Ivy's Bakery, and Starbucks, Canton. And, as always, our dear Friends of the Sharon Council on Aging continued to support our programs, the mailing of our monthly newsletter, and provided an emergency social service fund for elders in need, as well as many other requests to enhance and/or help us run our programs and trips.

**TRANSPORTATION:** The Center provided approximately 5,500 rides for medical appointments, shopping, programs and classes, parties, trips, etc.

**PROPERTY TAX WORK OFF PROGRAM:** 103 households will receive credit; at least 62 of these households will receive the maximum credit of \$750

**VOLUNTEERS:** more than 60 volunteers under COA supervision provided nearly \$185,000, at minimum or comparable wage, worth of services to the Town. This represents over 13,000 hours. We also received the benefits of hundreds of hours of volunteer services, valued at approximately \$110,000, by professionals – doctors, nurses, lawyers, tax professionals, etc. - whose services ranged from health screenings and counseling, to legal services and tax form preparation. The COA also developed and ran a volunteer training for the 13 receptionists we have on duty at the Center. Their roles have become much more complex since we opened and we are grateful to them for their support! Training for our drivers was also arranged and provided free by MArtap (Mass Rural Transit Assistance Program)

While weather was a factor this winter in some of our programs, with several having to be cancelled, people continued to participate in programs. It would appear, as predicted, that the center would and indeed has become a focal point in the lives of a many Sharon residents.