

Mattapoisett Council on Aging  
Annual Report  
2009

The Mattapoisett Council on Aging is housed within the Center School on 17 Barstow Street. Staff at the COA Social and Wellness Center includes an Outreach Specialist, Activities Scheduler, Executive Director as well as volunteers to answer phones and assist with office duties in addition to the volunteers assisting with many other tasks including data entry and leading workshops and classes. Volunteers donated over 5,000 hours of time to the Mattapoisett community through their work at the COA in 2009. The Social and Wellness Center is also the home of the Mattapoisett chapter of *Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders* (SHINE) with a volunteer SHINE counselor.

The COA targets its services and activities to the over 1,700 residents in Mattapoisett aged 60 and older and their families. In addition, in an effort to target the aging “baby boomer” population, the COA continues to develop and expand services tailored to fit not only the interests of its current clients, but also the interests and schedules of this younger group of residents while maintaining current popular programs and activities.

### **Programming**

*Transportation.* The services provided by the COA include transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Mattapoisett at very little cost to such destinations as grocery shopping, regular luncheon trips and many activities. Outings and trips made possible with the COA vans are quite popular and oftentimes, space on the vans is completely reserved with many on a waiting list. The popularity of such trips as our transportation to regional museums, fairs, and restaurants were well received. Transportation services also included destinations to medical appointments in the Boston and Providence areas. In 2009, the COA provided over 50 medical trips to the Boston area and trips to local appointments for clients requiring use of the handicap accessible van. Judy Anthony, our Activities Scheduler, coordinates all van transportation.

*Outreach.* The Council on Aging Outreach program consists of a variety of services overseen by Outreach Specialist, Ben Martin. In addition to providing referrals to clients for the many community services and other resources available to them, the Outreach program also provides home visits to homebound seniors, as well as visits to residents in an effort to introduce them to the services and programming offered at the COA. Our Outreach Specialist also oversees our *Friendly Visitor Program*, offered to elders who are generally homebound and who may benefit from a social visit from a friendly volunteer for an hour each week.

*SHINE.* The SHINE Program is developed, funded and managed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. SHINE counselors are volunteers who receive extensive training in many areas of health benefits. They are trained and certified by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Counselors can assist elders in understanding their health insurance needs, help elders process health benefits claims, inform elders of their rights under Medicare, review present coverage to prevent elders from paying for unnecessary or duplicate coverage, and make referrals to various agencies when appropriate. SHINE counseling is confidential and free of charge and SHINE counselors are on hand each Monday morning throughout the year, as well as by appointment.

*Serve New England.* The Mattapoisett COA sponsors a chapter of Serve New England, Inc.. Serve is an organization that allows individuals who volunteer for any cause or organization to purchase groceries, including fresh fruit and vegetable, meats and dry goods direct from wholesalers at about 40% of grocery store costs. The program is open to any individuals who volunteer, not just seniors.

*FISH.* FISH volunteers provide transportation to local medical or dental appointments at no fee for ambulatory seniors. Volunteers use their own vehicles and fuel. The COA coordinates transportation with FISH for ambulatory riders. Non-ambulatory riders or long distance appointments is provided by the Council on Aging. FISH provided about 200 rides to seniors in 2009.

### **Participation**

*Visitors.* The numbers of visits to the Center continue to increase. The number of visitors for the year in 2009 was over 12,000. This increase is due to the growing number of services and activities available through the COA over the past year including such exercise classes as Zumba Gold, Cardio Dance Fit and an additional morning of yoga, as well as an increase in the number of art classes and the introduction of mediation classes.

*Activities.* The participation in activities sponsored by the Council on Aging has increased considerably in the past few years as well. In 2009, the participation count averaged about 1,800 persons each month. These numbers do not include services provided over the telephone such as referrals to services or a friendly listener for isolated residents, nor does it include the number of visitors to the center not participating in particular activities but instead coming into the center for a cup of coffee and the social interaction.

*Van passengers.* The number of passengers riding the Council on Aging vans has increased dramatically in the past few years. In 2009, this trend continued with about 200 passengers riding the vans each month.

*Durable medical equipment loans.* The COA loans durable medical equipment for unspecified amounts of time free of charge. Since 2005, over 380 pieces of durable medical equipment have been loaned. To date, we have such pieces of equipment including wheelchairs, walkers, shower seats and more available.

## **Funding**

All in all, the Mattapoisett COA is able to offer a variety and number of services to town residents at efficient cost to the town. In 2009, the operating budget of the COA provided by the town was supplemented by donations, a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, a Title III grant through Coastline Elderly Services, Inc., a grant from Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), and gifts from the Friends of the Elderly of Mattapoisett, Inc. In addition, our volunteers from FISH contribute time and resources estimated to have saved the COA well over \$3,000 in driver costs as well as over \$14,000 in fuel expenses in calendar year 2009.

## **Volunteers, Staff & Supporting Organizations**

*The Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)* “provides services locally via Aging Services Access Points (ASAP), Councils on Aging and senior centers in communities across the Commonwealth. This network reaches out to elders in need of services that include home care and caregiver support, nutrition programs, protective services, health and wellness services, housing options, SHINE counseling, or counseling services for elders with limited English proficiency.”<sup>1</sup>

*Friends of the Elderly.* The Friends of the Elderly of Mattapoisett, Inc. was organized in 1990 as the fundraising arm of Council on Aging. The organization is a means of providing additional monies to carry out various social programs and events for seniors in Mattapoisett. The Friends of the Elderly of Mattapoisett, Inc. currently has 173 members as well as a Board of Directors consisting of 15 members. The Friends of the Elderly also supply the Social and Wellness Center with coffee, tea, and other supplies and arrange and fund three parties each year for the seniors of Mattapoisett. These parties include a Holiday Party, a St. Patrick’s Day Party and an Annual Summer Picnic. The Friends of the Elderly also hold several special interest groups that are open to all members including the Garden Group, Crafts Group, and Sunshine Committee. In 2009, the Friends also sponsored the COA motion picture licensing, purchased furniture for the Social and Wellness Center as well as offered many more gifts to benefit the elders of Mattapoisett.

*Coastline Elderly Services, Inc.* Coastline Elderly Services continues to serve as an invaluable resource to the Mattapoisett COA. Over the course of 2009, Coastline has continued the process of the Mattapoisett COA application for assistance in purchasing a new COA van. We are scheduled to receive this van in April of 2010. In addition, Coastline continues to manage the *Meals on Wheels* program in Mattapoisett as well as the nutrition site at Village Court. Coastline also offers case managers to Mattapoisett seniors in need of more intensive and comprehensive outreach than can be provided through the COA.

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of Elder Affairs website. Retrieved June 16, 2007.  
[www.mass.gov/?pageID=eldersutilities&L=1&sid=Elders&U=welcome\\_message](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eldersutilities&L=1&sid=Elders&U=welcome_message)

In addition to these entities, the Mattapoisett COA and the elders we serve have benefited immensely from collaborations with such organizations as U Mass Dartmouth's Career Resource Center has provided the COA with interns as well as Greater New Bedford C.O.A.S.T.

### **Highlights**

The COA offered elders and all community members many new and exciting activities and events in the past year. Among these was our first *Annual Morning of Wellness* in June of 2009 in which we offered information, activities and entertainment promoting prevention and wellness. The event was entirely free to participants and offered a free healthy breakfast, door prizes, a live music performance and much more. Another noteworthy event was our Girls Night Out in September of 2009. This evening event was an opportunity for elder women (and their guests) to get out of the house in the evening and enjoy themselves. This event was also free and open to all. The night included non-alcoholic cocktails, finger foods, free chair massages, manicures and reflexology services and much more.

Respectfully Submitted

Vanessa M.F. Williams, Ph.D.  
Executive Director