

# **ANNUAL REPORT: 2013**

**MATTAPOISETT**



**COUNCIL ON AGING**

“We’ve all been aging since the day we were born, so aging is a good thing! It means we’re alive; so let’s get to living!” The **Mattapoisett Council on Aging (COA)** is where people can help themselves to “live longer, stronger” by participating in activities and programs; receiving services; and meeting new friends or reconnecting with people. The Mattapoisett Council on Aging continues to evolve and to meet the many needs of our community. Located in the original building of Mattapoisett’s Center School at 17 Barstow St., the COA building is attached to the current elementary school. The COA is grateful for the shared space. Entering via the separate walkway, guests go up a half flight of stairs or take the elevator to the destination that may enhance their quality of life through socialization, fitness, the arts, entertainment, educational speakers and programs, resources and overall support.

The COA has use of three “classrooms.” One room is used as a shared office for the Executive Director, Outreach Coordinator and additional office staff / volunteers and resources. The second room is used as a “social” room, in which people share a cup of coffee or tea and other snacks, watch television on the leather sectional and may play a Wii video game. Many people will take and/or leave a book, take a moment (or longer) to work on a puzzle that is always “in the works”, and attend art classes, knitting group, play Scrabble, Bingo, Bridge, have meetings or just get together to socialize. The third room, which is located further from the main desk down a hall, is used as the “activity” room, and activity abounds! This scarcely furnished room is where people exercise, watch movies on a large screen television, and attend luncheons, entertainment and special programs that need the extra room.

In 2013, the COA welcomed 8,494 visitors and participants and provided over 741 rides.

### **Personnel**

“A lot with a little” is one way to describe the COA’s personnel. The entire payroll in 2013 was comprised of a full-time Executive Director, a part-time Outreach Coordinator (approx. 14 hours per week) and four part-time van drivers. The current Outreach Coordinator began working in May 2013, bringing with her a number of years of experience in elder services.

All van drivers attended the required training sessions this year: Coaching the Van Driver/Defensive Driving Course 4 (training requirement: yearly); Wheelchair Lift & Securement training (training requirement: yearly); Safe Transportation of the Public under the ADA or Passenger Sensitivity Training (training requirement for one or the other training: every three (3) years).

Our other “personnel” consisted of seniors in the Senior Tax Abatement program, also known as “Work-Off,” which the Town of Mattapoisett adopted under the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 184 sec. 52 of the Acts of 2002. The Work-Off Seniors staff our front desk in shifts of approximately two people every two hours for a total of six people per day, thirty people per week. In addition, Work-Off staff also provided cleaning services, tax preparation services and office support. At a rate of \$8/hour abatement (not to exceed \$750/yr.) to their real estate taxes, this program serves not only to support the COA and Town for cost-effective services, but also provides participating seniors with a sense of purpose, respect and service to their community.

**Volunteers:** The gems of our community can sometimes be counted, but sometimes, it’s the “unsung heroes” who come in to help just at the right time. In 2013 two seniors served over 190 volunteer hours working at our front desk. In addition, the COA is grateful to those who voluntarily come in to help with sorting and cutting the breads and pastries on a weekly basis; to the person who organizes the yarns and fabrics; to those who help set up chairs and tables; who clean the coffee area and who help with folding the newsletters each month. The 11-member volunteer Council on Aging Board members served over 240 hours for 2013. In April, members of the Mattapoisett Council on Aging Board attended the COA Board Training offered by the State’s Elder Affairs. Members assisted with the COA’s Health Fair in June and took the State Ethics training.

Free legal consultations of 15 minutes per person, for a maximum of four people per month were offered by Brandon Walecka, Associate Attorney at the Law Firm of Surprenant & Beneski. Reflexology services were provided by Lori Howes, who donated over 20 hours of service to twenty individuals during the year. Tax preparer, Peter Hodges, prepared taxes for Mattapoisett seniors. Mr. Hodges

performed his services under the Work-Off program, helping over 35 people from February to April 2013. His service was largely voluntary, given the tax abatement rate of \$8/hr. compared to the value of his service. Watercolor art classes were led by Margaret “Peggy” Cooper and Elizabeth “Libby” Klim, who volunteered over 90 hours of service.

Volunteer Coordinator for FISH (Friends in Service Helping), Jacquie McGraw, spent innumerable hours recruiting volunteer callers and drivers and getting the program organized every day, all year. In 2013, there were 17 volunteer callers and 27 drivers (10 drove year-round) of different ages who provided service under the FISH program (see “Transportation” section for further details). Additional volunteers are always needed.

### **Programs & Activities**

The COA is proud to offer a variety of activities and programs for different interests.

**Health & Wellness** programming included weekly sessions of Qi Gong (the practice of aligning breath, movement, and awareness for exercise, healing, and meditation), Strength & Balance, Belly Dancing, Sport Yoga, Walking Group, Cardio Fit, Meditation and Line Dancing.

**Arts & Craft** activities were Knitting Group, Water Color Painting and art education.

**Thinking & Social** activities included Scrabble, Bingo, Mah Jong, Bridge and Puzzles

**Speakers** presented topics as diverse as Knowing Your Consumer Rights, The Dilemma of Depression, Technology to Age Safely in the Home, Bone Health, The Scoop on Organics, Medication Check, Empowerment, Fire Safety, AARP Driver Safety, PhD in Healthcare, Homestead Act, Living Wills, Clutter Control and other information sessions!

**Live entertainment** included the Singing Nurse, Legends of Vegas, Sinatra Tribute, Elvis Tribute, Two for the Road singing duo, and more!

**Social & Educational Trips** were popular. Always a favorite were the fine dining establishments, the hearty fare, and those places that were picturesque or just a nice drive. Outdoor and indoor malls were visited and museums and other special interest locations. Many of these jaunts were recommended by the participants themselves. This year’s annual health fair had to be re-scheduled due to the Center School session being extended in June due to the harsh winter. The change in date caused some challenges in participation this year. The COA is committed to continuing to provide as many unique and interesting programs, and suggestions and other feedback are always welcome.

### **Services**

**Outreach:** Our Outreach services provided over 320 units of service to over 117 seniors and caregivers, providing information and referral, case management and advocacy services. This was more than a 64% increase over 2012. Collaboration with various departments and agencies were important in the team-oriented approach, to include Coastline Elderly Services, Inc., Mattapoisett’s Public Health Nurse, Mattapoisett Police & Fire, Alzheimer’s Support Group, PACE (People Acting in Community Endeavors) and other local agencies. Further, the Outreach Coordinator assisted people with applications for fuel assistance, provided guidance and resources for financial issues, and assisted with other concerns. One area that was expanded in 2013 was the Friendly Visitor Program. Volunteers are matched with homebound seniors and share their time with once a week visits. In 2013, the Outreach Coordinator set up monthly meetings with the Friendly Visitor volunteers, at which they were able to learn about area resources and to gain support and ideas.

**SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders):** A volunteer, formally trained by the Regional SHINE office, provides assistance with Medicare, Mass Health, Medicare Advantage, and other health insurance concerns. During 2013, SHINE provided service to approximately 70 individuals.

**Legal Services:** Free 15-minute legal consultations are offered monthly through the law office of Surprenant & Beneski.

**Dental Services:** The COA was pleased to collaborate with a Public Health Dental Hygienist who offered dental cleanings and fluoride treatments through the Oral Health Prevention Program.

**Durable Medical Equipment:** The COA freely loans durable medical equipment for unspecified amount of time. To date, we have available wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, shower seats and more.

### **Transportation**

**Medical:** Mattapoisett seniors who are ambulatory receive rides to medical and dental appointments in the area between Dartmouth and Wareham by volunteers through **FISH (Friends in Service Helping)**. FISH is a completely volunteer service comprised of people of various ages. The Mattapoisett Council on Aging serves as a communication conduit between the client and the volunteers. For those seniors who are non-ambulatory or need additional assistance, the COA van provides the transportation. In 2013 FISH volunteers provided 256 rides and the COA provided 27 rides to medical appointments. Medical appointments to the Boston area were provided through collaboration between New Bedford, Fairhaven and Mattapoisett COA's.

**Shopping Trips:** Weekly van service was provided to Fairhaven grocery stores and what is known as the "Fairhaven Loop", which is service to any location along the Fairhaven shopping district. Shoppers also took advantage of travel to Market Basket in New Bedford and the Dartmouth Mall. Service to Trader Joe's grocery store in Hyannis continued until March, when it was changed to the Foxboro store, located at Patriot's Place. This became a more popular location, with an average of 6 people traveling on a monthly basis and approximately 12 different people who have participated.

Altogether, with medical trips by the COA, shopping trips, social luncheons and educational trips (see "program" section above), and trips around town, including to the senior center, the COA vehicles provided 923 rides in 2013.

### **Facility, Equipment & Other Resources**

**Telephones:** Per Director's request, a local phone company, Clear Sound Communication, donated six (6) used multi-line phones to the COA. The owner, Chris Marcotte, also donated his time to install the phones, which took a full day to accomplish. These phones were an improvement to the previously used cordless phones, in that they allowed the callers to be placed on hold and to remotely contact other staff, rather than having to walk to the person to inform them that they had a call. In addition, these phones were set up so that the fax line was able to be used as an additional phone line, making things more efficient for no additional cost.

**Hand Scanner:** A "Magic Wand" portable hand scanner was purchased, which allows the Outreach Coordinator to assist homebound seniors with fuel assistance and other application materials, such as copying photo identifications, bills, etc. that are needed.

**WiFi:** The COA added its own WiFi (wireless internet) units to the COA. One unit was placed in the activity room, which is farthest from the main area, and the other unit was placed in the main office. Seniors began bringing in I-pads, tablets and laptops to use in at the COA.

**Vehicles:** The 2011 E350 van that was received in 2012 from SRTA had to be adjusted. This was a 12 passenger van, but two seats had to be removed permanently to reduce the van's weight. Without the weight reduction, a driver would have needed a CDL license. The COA vehicle fleet now consists of the following: 2010 Ford E350 (diesel), 12 passengers, under a Coastline Elderly, Inc. contract; 2011 Ford E350 (gas), 10 passengers, under SRTA contract; 2003 Dodge Ram van, 9 passengers, town owned; and a 2007 Ford Crown Victoria sedan, town owned.

### **Finances**

Operations at the Mattapoisett COA are funded primarily through Town funds. A Formula Grant is offered annually to all Massachusetts municipal Councils on Aging. The formula is calculated on a "per elder" basis, as approved by the State legislature. The total amount each city or town is granted is based on the municipal census figures. For FY13, the rate was \$7 per elder. Mattapoisett COA received \$11,928, which was based on the 2010 census of 1704 citizens over 60 years of age. The Formula grant was used to support the fitness/exercise programs, for conference education, organizational dues, and for equipment and furnishings at the COA. The COA also received a grant under Title III of the Older

Americans Act. The federal Title III funding is contingent upon allocation of Title III from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and distributed locally through Coastline Elderly Services. For the federal period of Oct. 2012-Sept. 2013, the Mattapoissett COA was awarded \$2,610.00, which was used to offset the Outreach Coordinator's compensation.

A check for \$3000 was received by the SRTA (Southeastern Regional Transit Authority). This money was from a State grant that, over five years ago, had been offered to towns in the SRTA area for "urban transportation." Because this money was unrestricted, it was used to purchase two new computers and appropriate software for the COA office and to provide grocery cards to eligible town seniors.

**Collaboration:** The COA hosted a "Clutter Control" program at the Library on a Saturday in February with over 60 people attending. Mattapoissett elementary school students received a "King Arthur Flour Company" donation and made fresh baked bread and distributed 100 loaves to Mattapoissett Seniors. The Lion's Club served 100 people at its annual turkey dinner at the Congregational Church and the COA provided van service to many attendees. Also, the Tri-County Symphony Orchestra and the Old Rochester Regional High School Drama Club offer complimentary tickets to Seniors through the COA. In addition, the Old Rochester Regional Junior High School provided its annual Thanksgiving dinner and the COA provided van transportation for seniors to attend.

We want to thank the Mattapoissett Friends of the Elderly, Inc. (FoE) for their continued support through the gift of their time and talents in fundraising and service. Organized in 1990 as a fundraising arm of the COA, the FoE supplies the COA with coffee, tea and other supplies, as needed. Each month they host a "Movie and Pizza" event at the COA, under a motion picture licensing agreement. They also host three parties each year, at which approximately 100 Town seniors and FoE members attend. Probably the most noticeable effort they fund is the monthly newsletter mailings. Members of the FoE also assist with preparing the newsletters for mailing each month.

COA members who served during 2013 include: Robert Belenger, Elizabeth "Liz" Field, Joan Flaherty, Gayle Jarvis, Judith Kennedy, Rev. Amy Lignitz-Harken, Lois Murray, Marcella Nelson, Melody Pacheco, Theresa Pereira, Claudia Richards, Earle Sylvia, and Robert Walter.

The Mattapoissett Council on Aging looks forward to being a destination for all citizens who are interested in living longer, stronger. As the baby boomer generation continues to enter the best years of their lives, the COA will continue to shape its offerings to meet the interests, needs and demands of our citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jacqueline Coucci  
Executive Director