

# **Successful Aging in Johnson County**



## **Successful Aging Report**

**PREPARED BY  
THE JOHNSON COUNTY CONSORTIUM  
ON SUCCESSFUL AGING  
SEPTEMBER • 2006**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging issued Successful Aging in Johnson County: A Market Analysis in June 2005. This work was completed thanks to the support provided by the Heritage Area Agency on Aging, Johnson County Public Health, the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center, the University of Iowa College of Public Health, the University of Iowa Center on Aging and the Johnson County Task Force on Aging.

The Consortium is now issuing this report on Successful Aging, thanks to the support of AARP Iowa.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aging Americans increasingly are interested in adding life to their years rather than just adding years to their lives. They are redefining their work careers, learning new skills, developing new leisure pursuits, enrolling in educational courses and volunteering for social causes. As more and more baby boomers reach retirement, the demand for a full array of retirement opportunities will expand even further. Johnson County already offers an abundance of opportunities for persons to age successfully and is considered among America's best places to retire. In this report, we considered what could be done in the next five years that will help Johnson County continue to be a desirable place to grow older. In particular, we focused on three areas pertaining to successful aging: education and leisure activities; programs and services offered by faith-based organizations; and opportunities for work and volunteering. We present the results of several data analyses conducted by the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging, and then consider the most viable directions to pursue over the next five years. The Consortium is confident that if Johnson County moves in the directions outlined, our community will continue to be one of the nation's most notable places to retire and age successfully.

# INTRODUCTION

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, Johnson County was home for 8,265 persons over the age of 65. Among Iowa's 99 counties, Johnson County ranks eighth in the size of its older population, and second in the growth of the aging population. Although Johnson County, home of the University of Iowa, has a relatively low median age, the percentage of older adults is steadily increasing. This growth is fueled by the increasing number of persons aged 50 and up who are coming here to retire or stay here and retire. Those aged 50-65, 12,755 persons, comprised 11.5% of the population in 2000 and had risen to 13.8% by 2004. Those aged 50 and up, accounted for 18.2% of the population in 2000 and had expanded to 21.7% of the county population by year 2005. This population greatly impacts the economic and cultural aspects of Johnson County.

The Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging conducted a formal study to determine what could be done over the next five years to make Johnson County an even better place for persons to age successfully. In the remainder of this report, the Consortium defines successful aging; reviews the results of its evaluation concerning successful aging in Johnson County; and presents some future directions that could be pursued to ensure that the county continues to be a place where persons can age successfully, and the Consortium also recognizes that any effort to make Johnson County a livable community for older persons will benefit persons of all ages.

# SUCCESSFUL AGING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

In 1961, at the first White House Conference on Aging, Robert Havighurst declared that the process of growing old should not be defined by an inevitable trend toward disease, disability, and death. He stated that old age instead should be viewed as a time of continued development and new experiences. He summarized his sentiments by declaring that growing old was not just about adding “years to our lives” but “adding life to our years.”

Indeed, many aging Americans are trying to maximize their retirement and pursue a variety of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, vocational and spiritual activities. They are starting new careers, learning new skills, developing new leisure interests, enrolling in educational programs and volunteering for social causes. As the baby boomers continue to age and join the ranks of the retired, institutions and businesses will need to reconsider how they develop products and provide programs and services to older persons.

During the 1980s, the MacArthur Studies of Successful Aging resolved that successful aging should be defined as: (a) the absence of disease and disability, (b) the maintenance of intellectual and physical functions, and (c) engagement in meaningful activities. More recently, the concept of successful aging has been linked with a developmental stage called the midcourse. The midcourse refers to a stage in which people transition out of adulthood roles and responsibilities. These people are not yet confronted by the challenges of growing old. People in their midcourse can embark

on unique developmental paths that were not accessible previously when they were raising children or pursuing full-time careers. Some of these paths include second careers and civic participation. Other paths include new leisure pursuits or spiritual activities. Researchers have confirmed that such ventures are tied to aging successfully.

Other researchers have argued that the definition of successful aging should encompass more than just experiencing a prolonged midcourse. Aging successfully also should entail the capacity to respond optimally to the inevitable challenges of growing old. For example, optimal aging occurs when an older adult learns how to manage his diabetes effectively so that it does not reduce his participation in work or volunteer activities. Another example of optimal aging occurs when a person who has lost the ability to drive has secured the means to travel back and forth to a place of employment or recreation.

### **Previous Research**

Between 2003 and 2005, the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging examined programs and services that could help adults age successfully. In *Successful Aging in Johnson County: A Market Analysis* it was reported that Johnson County offers ample opportunity for older adults to engage in a number of different activities that correspond with successful, optimal aging. The Iowa City Senior Center, the University of Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, public libraries, recreation centers and other organizations provide a range of educational and learning opportunities. There are year-round leisure and recreational options including water sports, golf, tennis, hiking and biking trails, and indoor

athletic facilities. Johnson County also provides an abundance of popular and high quality arts and entertainment. Older adults have the option to join a wide range of service, social, civic and faith-based organizations. Johnson County appears to provide older adults with an abundant selection of work and volunteer options.

However, the Consortium resolved that this initial analysis did not go far enough. The analysis did not determine how the county can meet the needs and preferences of the increasingly diverse and expanding population of older adults who will be living in and moving to the county over the next five years. It did not fully consider the impact of aging baby boomers. Several important questions were left unanswered. Just how many older adults were involved in leisure, education, work or volunteer activities? What is the demand for these opportunities over the next 5 to 10 years? What are the different organizations that provide opportunities for older adults? Can these organizations meet projected demand?

Following this, the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging conducted an in-depth analysis of what could be done in terms of sustaining and improving opportunities for persons to age successfully. In particular, the consortium examined: (a) educational and leisure opportunities, (b) programs and services provided by faith-based organizations, and (c) opportunities for work and volunteering. Separate reports have been prepared pertaining to health and supportive services, housing, transportation and mobility options.

## Research Method

This study consisted of a cross-sectional examination of programs and services pertaining to successful, optimal aging, and followed a standard approach to market analysis. The data used to conduct this analysis was obtained from six sources: (a) the 2000 United States Census of the Population; (b) a general survey completed by 1,068 older adults living in Johnson County; (c) a survey that was completed by 255 of these older adults that focused just on issues pertaining to successful aging; (d) a survey completed by 68 program administrators and service providers located in Johnson County; (e) public information about programs and services as presented in brochures, handouts, reports and web-sites; and (f) key informant interviews and focus groups involving providers and seniors. All individuals who participated in this study were informed about the goals and objectives, and were guaranteed that personal information would remain anonymous. They were also informed of their right to recall or amend any information that they had provided.

In each of the three sections that follow: (1) education and leisure opportunities, (2) activities offered by faith-based organizations and (3) employment and volunteer opportunities, the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging reviews the data that was collected and identifies future directions that can be pursued to help make Johnson County a more Livable Community, a place where seniors can age successfully in a wholesome multi-generational setting.

## EDUCATIONAL AND LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

Johnson County is home to numerous museums and festivals that are free to the public, and there are several leisure and entertainment programs available across Johnson County. The University of Iowa provides year-round programming that includes national touring productions of dance, music and theater, plus Big Ten athletic events. Iowa City and Coralville have established community theater groups and offer several public venues for music festivals and individual performances. Johnson



County is home to the Lake Macbride water recreation area. Additionally, there are Kent Park, Sugar Bottom, and the Coralville Lake recreational areas. Besides aquatic recreation, the Coralville Lake offers birding, camping, fishing, and a fossil gorge. There are nine golf courses and more than 30 fitness facilities. The recreation centers in North Liberty, Coralville, Iowa City, and those at the University of Iowa, are open to the public year-round.

Several agencies in Johnson County offer educational and learning programs to older adults. These programs are available via lectures, television, print and on-line media. The Johnson County/Iowa City Senior Center, the Heritage Area Agency on Aging and the Senior College, operated by the University of Iowa Alumni Association, offer lectures and classes for older adults year-round. Other community-based agencies and organizations in the county offer educational programs for older adults

at meal sites, hospitals, community centers, churches, and libraries. The University of Iowa and Kirkwood Community College offer formal educational opportunities and course offerings. While these courses are not aimed at any particular age group, older adults can easily enroll.

Johnson County has been widely cited as an exciting place to live no matter what a person's age. American Demographics rated the Coralville-Iowa City area in the top 10 of "Up and Coming" places to live. Expansion Management magazine ranked Iowa City third in terms of "livability." Men's Journal listed the area as an attractive, healthy and safe place to live. Organic Style ranked Iowa City as the healthiest community in the midwest. Outside magazine listed Iowa City as a top ten college town. Planet Out ranked Iowa City as one of the top twenty locations for same-sex couples. Sperling's rated Iowa City among the least stressful places to live. USA Today named Iowa City as one of the "Best Educated Cities." Utne Reader selected Iowa City as one of America's "Most Enlightened Towns." AARP has ranked Iowa City as one of the 15 best places to "reinvent your life."

## **Education and Leisure Programs Specifically for Older Adults**

Johnson County AARP published in 2006, Aging Without Limits! a directory of activities, classes and life-style options for the persons aged 50 and older who live in Johnson County. This directory lists over 200 options that help make Johnson County "A Great Place to Be."

The Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center, the Iowa City Recreation Centers, Coralville Recreational Center, Elder Services Incorporated, the

Lone Tree Community Center, the North Liberty Community Center, and the Solon Senior Center provide a broad array of services and activities targeting older adults. Some examples include fitness classes, swimming and water aerobics, meals, transportation services, craft



and social activities, support groups, and intergenerational programming. Similarly the county libraries (Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Solon, Tiffin, Oxford, Lone Tree and the University of Iowa) provide resources for various ages.

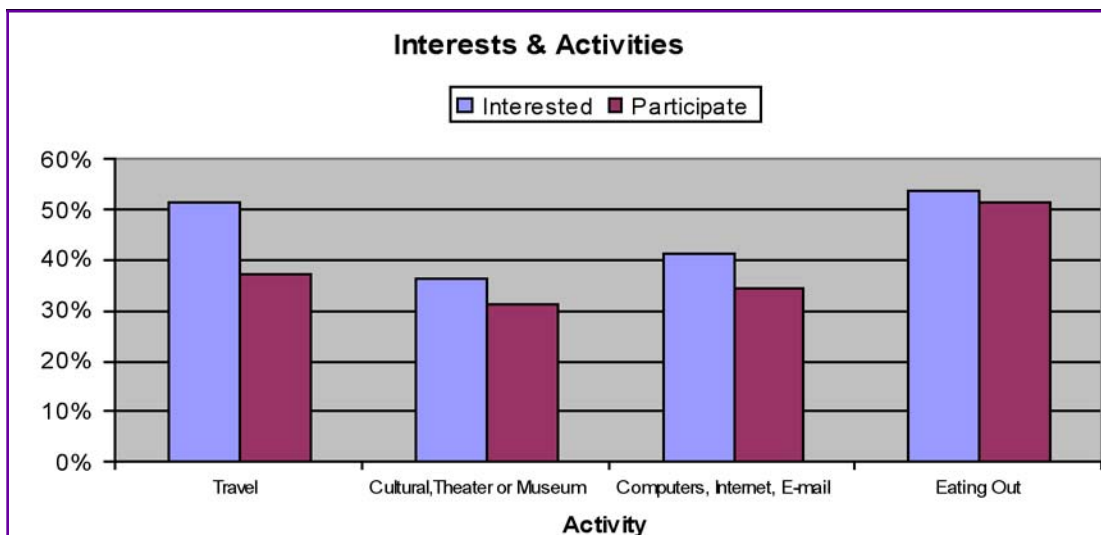
Among the program administrators who responded to the survey, 20 of the organizations explicitly provide educational and leisure opportunities to older adults. These programs offer a range of activities including computer education classes, exercise activities, and cultural outings. All of the programs reported that they were available to older adults throughout Johnson County, and were either free of charge or available at a discount to older adults. The Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center has a modest membership fee, with scholarships available to low-income seniors.

None of the program administrators thought they were doing a bad job of providing activities to older adults, but less than one out of three reported that they actually were planning to expand efforts for older adults. Three out of four reported they could do a better job of marketing their programs and increasing participation among older adults. When program administrators were asked how they could increase the participation of older adults, the two most common responses were that more money is

needed to support marketing and program staffing, and that additional transportation options are needed to get persons to and from programs.

## Interests and Participation among Older Adults

Among the 275 older adults who responded to the survey on successful aging, the three most popular retirement activities included eating out, traveling, and using the computer. Other popular interests included going to the theater, gardening, and attending sporting events. One out of every five older adults expressed an interest in playing games, such as billiards or bridge, or going to the movies.



After describing their interests, the older adults were asked to report their activity levels. In general, there was strong correlation between interest and activity level. For example, almost all the older adults who said they were interested in gardening actually were involved with some sort of gardening activity. Similarly, almost all older adults who expressed an interest in eating out reported that going out to restaurants was one of their primary retirement activities.

However, there were some gaps between interests and activity levels. Only three out of four adults who were interested in travel actually traveled in the past year. Other gaps concerned the access and use of computers and participation in fitness and exercise programs. Nearly three out of four older adults participated in retirement activities with a spouse or family member, three out of 10 said they participated in activities by themselves, and one out of four indicated they belonged to some sort of activity group or club. Older adults who could not actively pursue their interests reported that they had health problems or could not afford to do so.

Among the 275 older adults who responded to the survey questions concerning educational and learning interests, the most popular topics included health and legal matters, financial planning, exercise and fitness, arts and literature, and travel and culture. One out of ten older adults indicated that they wanted to learn more about caregiving issues or how to communicate more effectively with family members. Only 2% of the survey respondents were interested in learning more about a second career. Less than 2% thought that there were too few educational and learning opportunities available to older adults in Johnson County.

Nearly two out of three older adults reported owning a computer or having access to computer stations located in a public facility. Many of these older adults actively use their computer for electronic mail and to gather information from the internet.

Moreover, 55% of the survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay a fee in order to participate in an educational or learning experience that was targeted toward their interest and more than 30% reported that adult education was highly important. Still, less than 5% of older adults in Johnson County participated in an educational or learning program in the last year and only 1% enrolled in any sort of formal educational program (e.g., a class at the University).

### **Future Directions in Education and Leisure**

There appears to be a wide variety of educational and leisure options for older adults living in Johnson County. Yet it is unclear just how much these opportunities were developed and marketed specifically for older adults as opposed to the population in general and it remains unclear how well the demand for educational and leisure activities among older adults has been met. Our survey results revealed that most program administrators could expand their efforts to target older adults, and that older adults were not meeting all of their preferences concerning retirement activities.

The Consortium resolved that developing an on-line information resource would be helpful to both program providers and older adults who use computers. The Iowa Department of Elder Affairs currently is working to develop LifeLongLinks, a state-wide data base. Johnson County would benefit from working with this program and mirroring the web-site for Anoka County, Minnesota, that provides a comprehensive information resource and database for older residents.

In the focus groups that the Consortium held, it was clear that many seniors in the county desired that activities be held in various locations rather than in one central place. This suggests that the providers of services to seniors should seek to establish and work in close partnership with all segments of the county and that they should plan events which take place throughout the county.

Community centers outside of Iowa City have indicated that they would welcome having their facilities used. However they do not have the staff or contacts needed for such programming. This suggests to the Consortium that the centers, in and outside of Iowa City, actively request that groups and interested individuals plan and conduct programs in their facilities. An aging specialist might be hired to assist in serving as a “resource broker” for community centers as well as helping in the implementation of plans to make Johnson County a more livable community, a place where seniors can age successfully. It is also possible that the community centers could develop a mechanism to work together.

The month-long celebration of Older Americans month in May, 2006, sponsored by Johnson County AARP and the Johnson County Task Force on Aging, demonstrated the willingness of businesses and community groups to partner with seniors in the development and sponsorship of programs of interest to seniors across the county. The programming of events was supported by 118 area businesses, organizations and agencies and most of the events were free to the participants.

In regard to addressing the perceived need for travel opportunities, Elderhostel was identified as an exemplary organization that offers older adults affordable travel packages across the world. Part travel agency,

part university, part adventure club, this group declares that “The World is our classroom.” Given that Iowa City was one of the original Elderhostel sites during the 1970s, local programs might increase their effort to refer older adults to this organization as a way to promote affordable travel opportunities. Some organization or agency might take the lead in arranging for older adults from the county to attend an Elderhostel as a group.

Additionally, there are seven travel groups in the county which cater specifically to seniors, many of them sponsored by local banks. The banks might extend participation in some of their trips to low-income persons and to those who are not their customers.

Another area of unmet interest among older adults concerns the use of computers. While as many as two out of three older adults may have access to a computer, it is not clear how many older adults are proficient at using a computer to retrieve information. The Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center, which offers computer courses and a computer lab, and other groups such as the North Liberty Recreation Center and Solon Senior Center that provide computers, may wish to explore new and innovative ways to help seniors become more computer savvy.

A peer to peer computer assistant program could be established or junior high or high school students might provide one-on-one computer instruction. The Rotary Club of Santa Monica California sponsors local educational organizations to increase computer literacy among older adults, teaching them to use software office programs, electronic mail and

the internet. Perhaps a civic club in Johnson County could undertake a computer literacy program for older adults and support efforts to recycle computers that have been donated by businesses, governmental units and citizens.

The University of Iowa also might explore establishing a Center for Creative Retirement that follows the model developed by the University of North Carolina at Asheville. The North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement (NCCCR) has the threefold purpose of promoting lifelong learning, leadership, and community service opportunities for retirement-aged individuals. Besides serving the greater Asheville area, NCCCR collaborates with organizations in North Carolina and across the country.

In fact, one way to increase the participation in educational and learning experiences among older adults would be to supplement the Osher Foundation's award that was recently granted to the University Center on Aging to establish a lifelong learning institute. This institute specifically will provide educational opportunities to older members living in or near the university community.

## FAITH-BASED OPPORTUNITIES

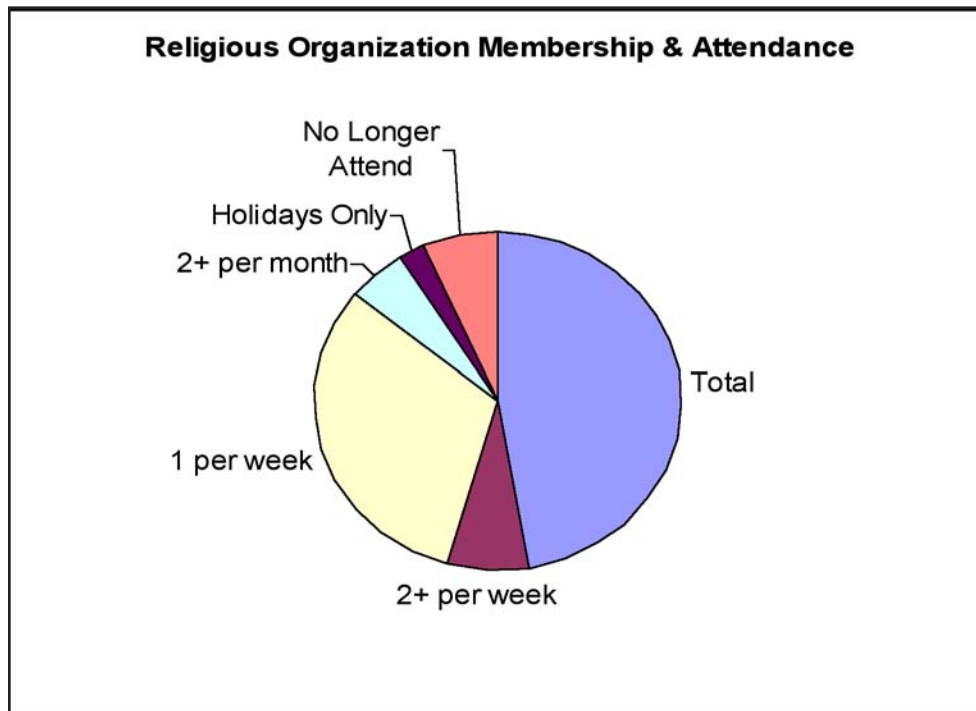
Johnson County is recognized nationally for its religious diversity. The Consultation of Religious Communities is composed of 28 different faith-based groups that share a long history of meeting local needs. Most notably, thirteen congregations joined together to build and manage Ecumenical Towers, an 81 unit apartment complex for older and disabled persons in Iowa City. The Towers are located next to the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center.

Among the nine faith-based organizations that responded to the survey, the results indicate that older adults comprise between 10 and 25% of their membership. Beyond providing services, educational programs were the most common activities offered to these older members. The second most common set of activities pertained to end-of-life counseling and bereavement support. Other programs for older members include health screenings and exercise programs. Some of the faith-based organizations provide parish nurses and home visitations for frail seniors.



Others provide hearing assistance devices and large print books during services. All of the faith-based organizations offer volunteer and service opportunities for older adults. All of the organizations think they can expand on their efforts and would benefit by learning more about what they can do for their older membership. The lack of financial support and staff support are the two biggest hurdles to program expansion.

## Spiritual Activities among Older Adults in Johnson County



Three out of four survey respondents indicate that they belong to a faith-based community and participate in one or two spiritual activities each week such as religious services, choir or Bible study. When asked about other types of activities they participate in, the older adults are most interested in senior-related activities, health programs, and volunteer opportunities. Some older adults indicate they would like to receive support from parish nurses and day care programs. Older adults also report that they are likely to read their parish bulletin to learn about activities and services.

## **Future Directions for Faith-Based Efforts**

Faith-based organizations have made significant contributions to the lives of older adults in Johnson County. This section of this report identifies: 1) resources that can be made available to assist the clergy, 2) opportunities for the faith-based organizations to share their facilities as a means of ministry, and 3) a listing of various opportunities for ministry that the faith-based organizations in Johnson County might consider as they develop their ministries to the older adults whom they serve.

### **Resources for Clergy**

Many seniors look to their clergy for advice, yet many clergy indicate that they do not know the services available. The Consortium has identified two specific ways of addressing this gap: 1) briefing sessions that would provide clergy an opportunity to become familiar with both the available services and the providers, and 2) a data base that contains the basic information needed to identify the service options available and information that could help an older person make an informed choice.

### **Sharing of Resources**

In the focus group, it was noted that some faith-based organizations have a building that could be utilized for various types of activities such as education, exercise and nutrition, and a bus or van that could be made available to transport older adults. Sharing these resources among different organizations would help increase the availability of programs and services at varied locations throughout the county and at locations not specifically identified “for seniors.”

## Ministries

There are educational materials that can be made available for the use of faith-based organizations to use to help persons plan their future. Three examples of materials developed by the federal Department of Health and Human Services are: (a) Own Your Future, a planning guide for long-term care, (b) You Can, which is material developed to encourage older adults to exercise, and (c) Quick Tips – When Talking with Your Doctor. These guidance materials could be provided to individuals by way of handouts or in group settings.

Parish Nurses have proven to be effective in helping persons age successfully. Faith-based organizations who lack the financial ability to add a person to their staff could consider using a retired or active health care professional in their faith-based community to provide face-to-face ministry, or offering their clergy, if needed, with an opportunity to receive appropriate training.

The analysis suggested that faith-based organizations might expand programs and services focused on end-of-life care. Since most organizations simply do not have the capacity to develop such programs individually, the organizations might involve Hospice staff in their programming and make available other end-of-life resources. In addition faith-based organizations might assist persons in end-of-life planning by encouraging them to execute legal documents, as well as recording their personal wishes.

Faith-based organizations are natural centers to encourage multi-age interaction. The annual May celebration of Older Americans Month presents a time when older adults may be given special recognition. Faith-based organizations might consider informally matching an older adult or couple, who is without a support family in the area, with a “friend.”

Faith based organizations not only depend upon volunteers to carry out its in-house ministries, they often actively encourage their members to engage in volunteer service in the community. Some present a large listing of volunteer opportunities, while others enlist their members to provide volunteer service, as well as financial support, to one or two selected agencies.

Perhaps, just as the churches worked together in establishing Ecumenical Towers, new efforts could be targeted to establish affordable group homes and/or an affordable assisted living facility. This sort of action would especially help meet the need of many low-income and middle-income seniors who cannot afford the currently available residential options.

# EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Successful aging has been linked with participating in work and volunteer activities. Older adults who continue to work, find a second career, or engage in volunteer activities, are less likely to experience poor health. These people also have increased levels of satisfaction with their daily lives. The engagement of older adults in work and volunteer opportunities also corresponds with social benefits. Employers benefit from the productivity of older adults in their organization, as well as older adults bringing a lifetime of experience, reliability and flexibility to full-time,

part-time and seasonal positions.



Volunteer organizations benefit from experienced older adults who enhance program and service delivery and mitigate staffing shortages. In a study completed by the AARP, Beyond 50.05, the link between aging successfully

and community engagement was evidenced further.

## Work and Volunteer Opportunities in Johnson County

There are over 2,600 businesses in Johnson County and more than 62,000 employees. Employment opportunities in Johnson County that target older adults include Experience Works, which is an income-based

training and employment program that finds jobs for persons 55 and over in business and non-profit agencies. Since entry or re-entry into the labor force may be difficult for some older adults, skill development and other types of assistance programs are important. There are four job training sites across Johnson County that provide seniors with employment training and placement assistance. The Hawkeye Area Community Action Program administers a Senior Community Service Employment Program and provides subsidized job training and work experiences for qualified older adults. There also is a Workforce Development Office in Iowa City and two temporary employment agencies. Goodwill Industries of Southeast Iowa and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services offer training and employment opportunities for all Iowans, including aging Iowans with disabilities.

Among the employers who responded to the survey, 27% (18 out of 65) said they currently employed persons over age 65. More than half of the survey responses indicate that it is realistic for organizations to employ older adults. Faith-based organizations were the most likely to employ someone over the age of 65 but some businesses in Johnson County make no concerted effort to hire older adults.

There is a wide variety of opportunities for volunteers in Johnson County, and several programs specifically recruit older adults.



The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), which is for persons age 55 and over, provides volunteers in schools. The “Speak Up” program teaches 5th graders to write and present speeches and “Reading Together” helps students improve

their reading skills. RSVP also offers volunteer opportunities to help deliver meals to isolated seniors, serve as resident advocates at nursing homes, help at Iowa Valley Habitat of Humanity, and assist at the Court House and Sheriff’s Office, Police Departments, county libraries and community centers. The University of Iowa Health Care, the VA Center, Mercy Hospital and the Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center provide volunteering opportunities for people of all ages.

Among the survey responses, 65% of the businesses (42 out of 65) said they currently provide volunteer opportunities for persons over the age of 65, and almost all indicated that it is realistic for organizations to offer volunteer opportunities for older adults. Faith-based and health care organizations were the most likely to provide volunteer opportunities to people over the age of 65.

## Older Adults and Civic Engagement

Slightly more than 15% of older adult survey respondents currently are being paid to work (which matches the U.S. Census data for Johnson County). Among these working older adults, 40% work full-time, 20% work part-time, and 40% work in contract, short-term, or consulting positions. When asked why they continue to work, 60% said their primary reason was their personal interest in the job and the social and other non-economic benefits; 40% said their primary reason was financial need. Among the non-working older adults, nearly 20% said they would go back to work if the right opportunity was made available.

More than half (56%) of the survey respondents indicated that they agree that there are enough opportunities to work in Johnson County. Interestingly, few older adults thought that a lack of skills or training was a barrier to returning to work. The most common barriers were health problems and disability.

The survey responses also indicated that 58% of older adults in Johnson County participated in some kind of volunteer activity. The volunteer activities included mentoring in local schools, serving in faith-based organizations, or at Mercy Hospital and University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC). Among those who do not volunteer, the majority said they were aware of volunteer opportunities but were not able (e.g., health reasons) or interested (e.g., prefer to do other things) in participating.

## **Future Directions Concerning the Engagement of Older Adults**

It appears that many businesses in Johnson County do not engage older adults in work opportunities nor make any concerted effort to recruit them.

This suggests it might be worth educating employers about the role aging Iowans play in meeting labor demands and be offered examples of how to make adjustments and accommodations that provide incentives for aging workers.

Such incentives include more attractive and flexible work options, phased retirement, job sharing, part-year and other non-traditional work schedules, and retiree rehire programs. Some employees are now using a “retiree casual” program. When employees retire with full pension and medical benefits, they can volunteer for the program and then be rehired for up to a thousand hours a year when the company is in the surge mode. Some managers have referred valued former employees to a temp agency to be placed back in the company from which he or she has retired when their corporate policies prohibit the straight rehiring of recent retirees.

Stanley Consultants of Muscatine, Iowa, was named by AARP the 2005 Best Employer for Workers Over 50. This company provides phased retirement, a “time off bank” of donated vacation time which members can use to care for family members, and a 401(k) plan that the company contributes to regardless of employee participation.

AARP recently entered into an agreement with several organizations including Home Depot and Manpower and selected the state of Iowa to lead their campaign called "Connecting with Experience." The objective of this partnership is to increase the workforce participation of older adults. This program can be looked upon by employers here in Johnson County as an example of how to identify, recruit and retain older adults in full-time, part-time and seasonal positions.

Ken Dychtwald, author of "Age Power" and "Age Wave," suggested that many Baby Boomers may consider starting a new business upon retirement. The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) program is available in Johnson County to help those in business or wanting to start a new business. Older adults in Johnson County could be a powerful force in the economic development of the county and incentives should be provided to those interested in starting a new career.

Our survey results indicated that many older adults place a high value on the non-economic benefits of working and there are several older adults who would return to work or volunteer if the right opportunity came along. Following this, efforts should be targeted towards providing older adults a greater number of paid and voluntary roles that provide them a more definitive sense of accomplishment and engage them in a meaningful experience.

The Chamber of Commerce might take the lead in helping the business community better utilize and serve older adults. In 2006, the National Council on Aging identified a set of promising program practices

providing paid and unpaid roles that constitute meaningful forms of civic engagement. One of these programs is Experience Corps, a program which is located in a dozen cities across the United States. It trains and places older volunteers in tutoring and mentoring positions within local schools. Another promising practice is called Legacy Leadership which provides older adults with extensive training before placing them in a variety of locations such as environmental protection, conflict resolution and public policy. For example, Legacy Leadership Institutes at the University of Maryland offer training and leadership opportunities for older adults in government offices and the nonprofit sector in Maryland.

## DISCUSSION

The Consortium examined three topics that contribute to successful aging: educational and leisure opportunities, activities offered by faith-based organizations, and employment and volunteer opportunities. The Consortium understands that if Johnson County is going to continue to meet the needs of its aging citizens, all segments of the county must work together to expand educational and information resources pertaining to successful aging and to expand the array of programs and services available that promote successful aging.

The analysis repeatedly indicated that efforts should be directed towards sharpening the focus among program and service administrators in such a way that would correspond with increasing their efforts to target the aging population. The analysis specifically suggested that program staff from those organizations that did not already serve the older population would benefit most from this type of information, and these program staff would benefit from learning more about the needs and preferences of older adults, especially those with health problems or limited financial resources. These staff also would benefit from learning about programs and services that may be complementary to their own efforts. For example, instead of developing new programs for older members, leaders from religious organizations may benefit by learning about other programs that could be used by members of their organizations. As they become more aware of the market supply and demand, faith based groups may better determine when to partner with other organizations or initiate their own efforts.

These sorts of public education efforts are likely to have noticeable impact. Restaurants may increasingly offer senior discounts, movie theaters may develop a program series that features 'the classics' and performing arts groups may extend mid-day programming to allow more older adults to attend performances. The costs (and profitability) of making such efforts would be a function of demand. This research suggests that there remains a general demand for services that interest older adults and this demand will increase significantly in the next five to ten years.

Besides financial barriers, the administrators consistently reported that expansion efforts were limited by a lack of staff support. While these staffing problems may be resolved as programs find viable ways to meet market demands (and cover the costs of hiring new staff), another approach was considered that could help meet program and service staffing needs.

Local organizations, in addition to utilizing senior volunteers and employees, could increase their reliance on the University of Iowa by making arrangements to recruit undergraduate and graduate students who need to fulfill fellowship and practicum hours that meet their academic requirements. Such programs include business, fine arts, leisure studies and social work. The University also has established a civic engagement program that could link student volunteers with local organizations. In addition, the Aging Studies Program and Center on Aging could facilitate access to students who would fulfill a specified number of service hours (often at little or no charge).

The analysis did not indicate that the county needed to establish new programs and services as much as expand existing ones. The Consortium specifically resolved that entertainment, education, work and volunteer opportunities were widely available but could be expanded in a way so that they become more accessible to older adults throughout the county, especially to those who currently are limited by health or financial reasons.

Altogether, a number of best practices have been identified and viable ways suggested to improve the opportunities to age successfully in Johnson County. The Consortium also has supported increasing efforts to inform older adults about these opportunities as a way to help them define their demands more explicitly. However, it is resolved that this call for program and service expansion requires more than the membership of the Johnson County Consortium on Successful Aging. These efforts require the involvement of planning boards and executive officers who have discretion over the administrative and financial resources that could support program and service expansion.

## CONCLUSIONS

Johnson County, with its urban-rural mix, provides ample opportunities for persons to age successfully and participate in leisure and entertainment, educational and learning programs, in a faith-based community that responds to their needs and work and volunteer experiences that meet their individual preferences. In some respects, Johnson County has achieved this reputation as one of the best places to retire without any concerted effort. The Consortium is left thinking about what could happen if the business, educational, political, social, faith-based and service organizations from across the county, make a conscious effort to work together and determine how Johnson County can respond to the increasing program and service demands made by the aging population. The Consortium is confident that pursuing the directions outlined in this report will ensure that the county remains one of the nation's most livable communities for persons to age successfully.

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## **BEST PRACTICES**

AARP(2005)BEYOND 50.05: A Report to the Nation on Liveable Communities: Creating Environments for Successful Aging

Administration on Aging (2004) Senior Community Service Employment Program Available online <http://www.aoa.gov/>

ElderHostel (2006) <http://www.elderhostel.org/ein/intro.asp>

Experience Corps (2004) <http://www.experiencecorps.org/>

Foster Grandparent Program – Handicare Inc <http://www.handicareinc.com/FosterGrandparentProgram/>

National Council on Aging <http://www.ncoa.org/content.cfm?sectionID=272&BriefingID=38&BriefingDetail=true>

Retired Seniors Volunteer Program <http://elderservicesiowa.com/RSVP.html>

Santa Monica Rotary Club [http://www.helpguide.org/elder\\_care.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/elder_care.htm)

Senior Corps (2004) <http://www.seniorcorps.org/>

Service Corps for Retired Executives (SCORE) <http://www.score.org/index.html>

University of North Carolina, Asheville <http://www.unca.edu/ncccr/>

## **WEBSITES**

Consultation of Religious Communities <http://www.avalon.net/~fbcic/mission.html>

Coralville Recreational Center <http://www.coralville.org/reccenter.asp>

Heritage Area Agency on Aging <http://www.heritageaaa.org>

Iowa City Crisis Center <http://www.johnsoncountycrisiscenter.org/>

Iowa City/Johnson County Senior Center <http://www.icgov/senior/default.asp>

Iowa City Workforce Development Center <http://www.iowaworkforce.org/region10/iowacity.htm>

Iowa Legal Aid Society <http://www.iowalegalaid.org/about/index.cfm/pagename=homepage>

Johnson County Visitor's Center <http://www.icccvb.org/about.asp>

Kirkwood Community College <http://www.kirkwood.cc.ia.us/>

Lake MacBride water recreation area <http://www.north-liberty.com/recreation/macbride.htm>

North Liberty Community Center <http://www.northlibertyiowa.org/rec/>

Senior College, University of Iowa Alumni Association <http://www.iowalum.com/srcollege/>