

E2

SM

10-12-71 D

Attaining Community
Involvement In Programs
For Senior Adults

Cooperative Extension Service
Oregon State University

Extension Circular 786

September 1971

Senior Adults

Involve the senior adults first because they are the key people. One way to involve them is through their own organizations, such as the local Senior Citizens Club, and various associations of retired people. Often senior adults are also members of community organizations such as Granges, men's and women's service clubs, and churches. They may also belong to volunteer groups such as the American Red Cross.

Find out what the senior adults think needs to be done for their age group on a community basis and how much they can do for themselves, such as transportation service, a senior adults center, or just having someone to telephone those who are shut-ins or live-alones.

At the same time, involve the senior adults in community projects so that the community will become more aware of this resource. Senior adults can help teach remedial reading to grade school children, teach sewing to 4-H girls, or serve as "foster grandparents" and advisors.

Recognize that some senior adults are financially able to give substantial sums of money to community projects, some of which may be related to senior adults projects.

Civic Groups

Involve the civic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, churches, schools, and business organizations.

Senior adults can begin to involve civic groups by talking with them about the role of seniors in the community and then how the community can help the senior citizens. When a program for senior adults is launched, the program leader can return to these groups and ask for their support. For example, the seniors might interest a group such as the Chamber of Commerce in helping to sponsor

entertainment or exhibits for Senior Citizens Month.

A Council on Aging is one result of support from these community groups. If many community organizations are represented on the council, they provide a cross-section of the community's opinions, ideas, and needs. Armed with this support the council can plan and implement efficient programs for the senior citizens.

Support from these groups also can help when public funds are needed for a senior center. Several groups may join together to raise money or one group might spearhead a fund drive. Or, the talks between these groups and senior adults may result in a Dial-A-Neighbor program where younger community members make daily calls to senior adults who are shut-ins or live-alones. Talks with educational representatives may bring about lowered fees for senior adults taking adult education classes. Or, such classes could be established at a near-by high school or college. Other benefits may include lowered bus fares or reduced costs for public functions such as concerts.

The Government

Involve all levels of government by asking government officials to speak at senior adults meetings. Ask them to serve on planning committees and program boards. Encourage senior adults to speak about their needs that are beyond what they can do for themselves, and then propose programs at city council meetings. Encourage them to talk about their needs with congressmen and legislators.

The Mass Media

Involve the mass media, especially representatives from daily and weekly newspapers and local radio stations.

This is one of a series of leaflets based on experience gained in the Lincoln County, Oregon, Community Self-Help Program with Older Adults, along with the study of similar programs in other areas.

Community involvement is the very foundation for success in a self-help program for senior adults. This involvement is a two-way street. The community will be more willing to help the senior adults if the senior adults will first make an effort to help themselves. In turn, once the senior adults gain community support, they will be more willing to support community projects and programs.

Some projects require more community involvement than others. Whatever type of program is planned there are key community people and groups that may be involved to lend their financial and manpower support.

Newspaper and radio personnel usually know their community. Invite representatives to senior adults meetings and encourage them to serve on program planning committees. Let them know what senior adults are doing for the community.

Send news releases to weekly and daily papers to keep them informed of each step in a program for senior adults. When a special event, such as Senior Citizens Month comes up, check with local radio stations to see if they will air activities as a public service.

Youth Groups

Involve youth, such as members of church, school, "Y" or 4-H groups, and Scout groups, by inviting them to senior adults meetings. In turn, senior adults may attend their meetings and give talks and guidance on subjects ranging from outdoor skills to sewing. Youth groups are often "project minded" and can do much to help the senior adults by planting shrubs at a senior center, cleaning up yards, or painting fences when the seniors can no longer do it themselves. Most youth groups are looking for service projects and most youths are sympathetic to anyone with a special need. They, too, need to be needed. Involving young people and older people together is one way to bridge the generation gap and create appreciation for each age group.

Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Lee Kolmer, director, Oregon State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating. Printed and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.