

Opening Session Remarks
Empowering Communities for Successful Aging
Conference
Saratoga Springs, NY
November 12, 2008

First I want to thank AARP and the New York State Association of Homes & Services for the Aging for sponsoring this conference. I also want to give special thanks to Rick Ianello and the Albany Guardian Society for all the hard work and headaches in producing this conference which has turned into such a large and successful event. And, I want to thank all of our staff from the New York State Office for the Aging who have worked so hard on this conference for many months. Special thanks go to John Cochran and Jody Signoracci and the entire planning committee.

All across the state, wonderful things are happening in our communities.

So many people are part of the aging and health care networks that are helping to keep older family, friends and residents living in the community.

- In Ithaca, *Eco-Village* is demonstrating the benefits of co-housing and living in community.
- In Essex County, *Mercy Care of the Adirondacks* has established a parish nurse visitor program to isolated seniors.
- In Oneida County, Sunset Housing has expanded to become *Sunset Neighborhood* so that older persons in the surrounding community could join together to help each other stay living there.
- In Schoharie County there is a model rural transportation program run by a senior association.
- And, in Saratoga County, the non-profit group *Umbrella* is helping people stay living at home through their home repair program.
- In Westchester County, towns are being organized to plan for improvements in the community. Broome and Rockland Counties and the cities of Rochester and New York are some of the leaders in planning for livable communities.

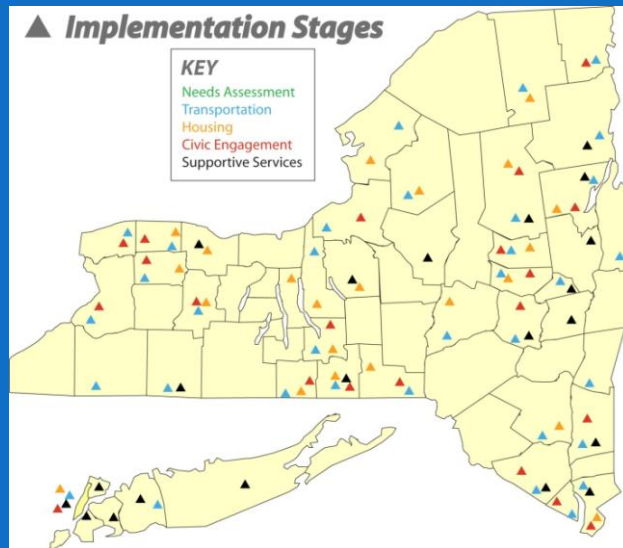
These are just a few examples of what these maps show is going on in communities all across the state. We asked our area agencies on aging to tell us about planning and implementation activities in their areas.

Evidence of **PLANNING** for Aging in Community – NYS Counties



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IMPLEMENTATION activities for Aging in Community in NYS counties



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So we asked what would happen if we brought together the senior advocates, volunteers and staff who work with caregivers, who work with housing projects, who work with faith communities, who work with over fifty Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and those who work as health providers, those working in the aging network, those who work in municipal and community planning and many others working in the community? What would happen?



Providing an opportunity for participants to create a plan of action for the creation of aging-friendly livable communities.

Well, we will now find out in the next two days. I have a feeling we will find ourselves energized and empowered.

You are the people who are proving that with determination and leadership and sharing of knowledge and best practices, we can improve the quality of life for older persons in New York State. Some have said that we are creating a movement. No, it already exists. Coming together now shows a mosaic and a mirror of New York and allows us to gain a fuller appreciation of the effort and a fuller sense of what could be possible with new ideas for our own communities.

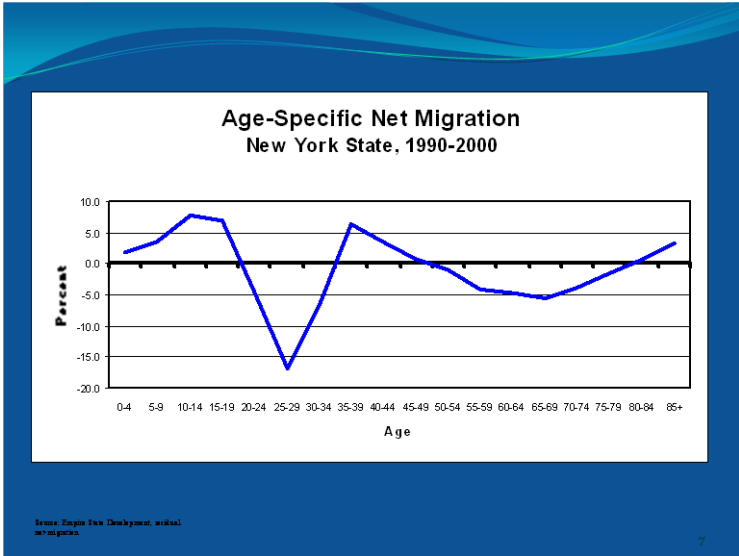


We are also here because seniors whether they be ourselves, our parents, our relatives or friends are saying clearly that they want to live independently and age with dignity in the community. It is more than just a desired lifestyle, though, it is a determination that they don't want their dignity and personhood to be diminished because of frailty or declined abilities. They are insisting that old age isn't about what "they are going to do to us" but what we as a community can do for each other to make sure that everyone can be treated with respect and dignity and security.



We don't want to age into a life of being *marginalized, subsidized and institutionalized*. We'd rather than **energized and mobilized** to keep making life better for as long as we can and then have the support of family, friends and community when we are in need

We really have no choice but to come here and proceed with this movement. The age wave of Baby Boomers coming can either scare, depress, intimidate and paralyze us or it can be an opportunity. Look at the change that is happening not just the aging of the population, but the net in-migration of persons in the eighties to be closer to family and services in New York.



% Aged 60+	2000 # of Counties	2015 # of Counties
12% - 19%	48	8
20% - 24%	13	35
25% - 29%	1	17
30% or more	0	2

Many of you are leading the way by showing that by involving older persons as a resource, not as burdens, that we can help each other. It's happening every day right now with the volunteers in hospice and other health care programs, in our long term care ombuds program, Medicare counseling, Foster grandparents and intergenerational programs, RSVP and so much more. Now we have to extend that spirit to helping to plan and promote livable communities for seniors and all ages, to build communities of greater cooperation and inter-dependence .

Community Approaches to Aging Common Features

Element	Features
Basic Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Includes Accessible & Affordable housing & community areas •Provides Information about services •Fosters safety
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meaningful Connections •Active Community Engagement •Opportunities for Paid or Volunteer Work
Health & Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Facilitates access to medical and social services •Supports Individual & Community activities that promote healthy living
Independence & Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Coordinates or offers transportation •Supports family & other caregivers

Source: NASUA videoconference, November 2008. *Community Approaches To Aging – A Focus on the Village Movement.*

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It's not anything new or different. Older persons did it before when asked. In World War II, they mobilized block by block for civil defense. Can we do that again? Can we take that spirit, could we harness the same energy that elected a President last week with sophisticated micro-targeting of neighborhoods and mobilizing to get out of the vote.



We need to use the human capital and the energy of the generations of active and healthy retirees who are now available in the community.



We can crack the atom of civic power as someone has said and literally use this social capital to address many of our social problems.

Civic Engagement

Throughout the aging network, our systems are built upon the dedication of volunteers.

- NYS Office for the Aging focus on Civic Engagement, bringing volunteers, particularly retirees, into our programs.
 - Governor Paterson has placed new emphasis on volunteerism
- www.newyorkersvolunteer.org

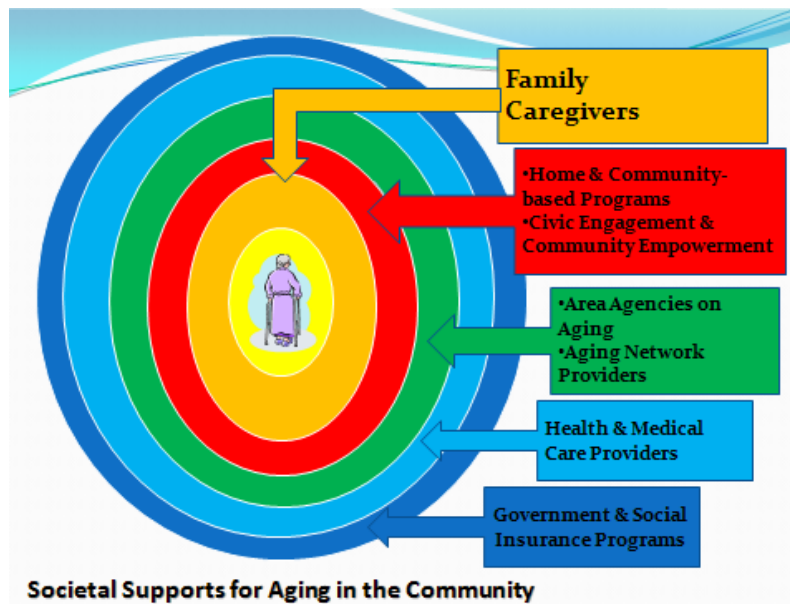
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New York is one of six states chosen by the National Governors Association to develop a plan for using older workers and older volunteers. We really have to do this. We have no better options especially in the economic crisis we are in. We can't put everybody in nursing homes or even assisted living. The other option is to just ignore the problem and that is unacceptable as well.



So here we are with an opportunity. We know that Social Security and Medicare are the foundations of the economic and health care security for older Americans.

It is the network of caregivers, faith based communities, and agencies and local governments that are the family and community foundation to ensure that beyond the financial and health security that we have a network of community security.



This is the policy of our state. We call it NY@HOME and community empowerment is a key part of it. Let's make it a reality in all of our communities.

Independent Living for Older New Yorkers

NEW YORK @ HOME

- **Support for Caregivers**
 - Social Adult Day Care
 - Respite Services
- **Non-Medical Home & Community-based Services**
 - EISEP
 - Home Delivered Meals
 - Congregate Meals
- **Economic Security**
 - STAR property tax rebates
 - Home Energy Assistance Program
 - Weatherization Referral & Packing Program
- **NY Connects**
 - Information & Assistance
- **Livable Communities & Community Empowerment**
 - NORCs
 - Model Planning & Zoning
 - Volunteer Recruitment

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