

9/30/20 Advocacy Meeting

Discussion topics:

The new website is up and functioning. It has a full page devoted to Advocacy!

Steve Lorberbaum discussed his contribution to the Age Friendly Montgomery, Home and Community Based Services Domain. There are 10 Domains within Age Friendly Montgomery. This Home and Community Based Services meets once every two months and has about 15 attendees. Amongst its many accomplishments, the Caregiver Support Program publishes a monthly caregiver support eNewsletter. They established the Montgomery County Caregiver Coalition and LGBTQIA+ Caregiver advisory group and they developed "A Guide to Caregiver Supports in Montgomery County" resource guide.

Another example of success of Age Friendly Montgomery is a pilot HOME SHARING program that was approved for the 2020 County budget. The goal was to have the pilot program in place by February 2020. (Awarded to Housing Initiative Partnership) The goal for placement of home seekers with homeowners is 5 for the six months.

Montgomery County is renewing its three year Age Friendly certification with WHO/AARP. Chuck Kaufmann was involved in the earliest group working on the Age-Friendly initiative to transform Montgomery County into a *Community for a Lifetime*.

A comprehensive report on Age Friendly 2020 and beyond can be found at this link. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior/Resources/Files/Age-Friendly_2020_beyond.pdf

Steve agreed to discuss helping GROWS put together a panel discussion to inform GROWS members about Age Friendly Montgomery.

Aging in Community: • The Committee is evaluating the Senior Fellows program. The Senior Fellows provide great value in the community and should be expanded.

- The County Planning Department has been conducting two housing studies in the past year:

- o The Housing Needs study was finalized and released in the spring. It establishes a very good baseline of county housing needs. Older adults are the only group that is actually increasing home ownership. Millennials are having a hard time; not a lot of wealth and there's an inadequate supply of housing for older adults.

o A draft of the study on preservation of affordable housing was released this summer. Rent stabilization is one of their recommendations. They would like feedback on the draft. Discussion followed her summary of the study.

- During discussion about the studies, the AIC committee learned the following:

- o Silver Spring is looking at increasing density around single family home neighborhoods.

- o There isn't good data about delinquencies among older adults. Rental delinquencies are a big problem.

- 4,000 post cards with information about available county services were distributed to County residents including those in congregate housing sites. It is hard to measure the impact. One possible way to measure county outreach efforts is data collected by Lylie Fisher for caregivers on her YouTube program called "Engage@Home" which comes out monthly. There have been 62,498 views since its launch in March 2020 and the average viewer age is the early 70s.

- The state's durable medical equipment loan program has been launched. <https://aging.maryland.gov/pages/DME.aspx>

- HHS has awarded the Home Sharing contract to the Housing Initiative Partnership which already has an existing working relationship with DHCA and in Montgomery and Prince Georges counties.

Public Policy: A letter was sent to the County Council regarding E-Scooters and how regulation should take into consideration older adult issues. For example, "It is important that e scooters travel on designated pathways whenever possible to minimize conflicts with pedestrians and avoid injuries. In addition, e-scooters need clear and delineated areas to park, in order to be out of the path of pedestrians. For safety, the Bill should require pavement markings and signs on heavily traveled sidewalks, streets and corridors to delineate where e-scooter use is permissible as well as to identify where and how to park an e-scooter on the streetscape."

The County has a 30,000 per month testing goal which it is currently on pace. The County can provide COVID testing at home under certain circumstances. Go to <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing/home-based-testing.html>.

The VOTING Outreach Coordinator is Dr. Gilberto Zelaya at Gilberto.Zelaya@montgomerycountymd.gov. GROWS is having a what you need to know event with Dr. Zelaya on October 8th.

Montgomery County officials launched the second phase of the COVID Rent Relief Program to provide financial assistance to eligible residents. The program will accept applications on a rolling basis while funds remain available. Eligibility for the County's Rental Assistance program has changed from age 62 to 55 (for individuals applying as a one-person household). The benefit has changed from \$200 to \$400.

Lynn Friss Feinberg at AARP provided us with a link to an AARP report, Breaking New Ground: Supporting Employed Family Caregivers with Workplace Leave Policies: <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2018/breaking-new-ground-supporting-employed-family-caregivers-with-workplace-leave-policies.html>. Ms. Feinberg referred us to the National Partnership for Women & Families, <https://www.nationalpartnership.org>, which is tracking new emergency legislation providing paid sick days and paid leave during the pandemic. Ms. Feinberg explains that the CARES Act, enacted 3/27/20, provides some workers up to 10 paid sick days and up to 10 weeks of paid family and medical leave until 12/31/20. The Act also allows the Dept. of Labor to exempt small businesses with less than 50 employees (leaving out about 60 million workers) and also has exemptions for health care workers. Family caregivers of older adults have less access to this paid leave than others. Workers caring for adults affected by COVID-19 are ineligible for emergency paid family leave (only allowed for childcare) and workers can only receive 2/3 wage replacement for sick leave when caring for anyone other than themselves.

A letter to the County Executive and Council is in the final stages that addresses:

- Free COVID-19 testing for healthcare workers in a separate site from others in the community in each of the four county designated hubs.
- A specific time and testing location solely for healthcare workers to receive testing.
- Rapid test results to healthcare workers from these sites.
- Supplying businesses providing care to the elderly population with county provided test kits and access to County labs to help alleviate the stress on overtaxed County testing sites.

Health and Wellness: The Hearing Loss fact sheet was finalized, and 1000 copies printed. You can contact David Engel if you would like copies, they are available. Electronic copies have been distributed around the county and a link is available on the Advocacy page of the GROWS website. Robin Henoch is working with the Commission to produce a letter mentioned in the Public Policy Committee notes. The next topic that the Health and Wellness Committee is researching is Social Isolation. On October 6th, Casey from AARP will be the featured speaker. E.A. Casey – who goes by Casey and uses they/them pronouns – is a strategic advisor and program manager with AARP Foundation's Isolation Impact Area, where they have led the development and implementation

of strategies and programs to combat isolation and loneliness among vulnerable older adults. Check out the www.connect2affect.org website for tools to overcome isolation.

The Commission on Aging met on 9/24/2020. Speakers were Tiffany Ward, the County Chief Equity Officer and Betty Lam, Chief of the DHHS Office of Community Affairs. Will Jawando will be the speaker at the October 22nd meeting. The top rated Budget Priority for 2022 is adding two social workers to Adult Protection Services. There are 13 priorities that were ranked and the #2 priority was expanding the Senior Nutrition Programs.

Isabelle discussed building an email or contact list for GROWS awareness to faith based groups. She will work with Gloria on adding contacts. GROWS currently advertises in the Jewish Week and the Beacon.

The next GROWS Advocacy committee meeting will be October 27th at 1pm on ZOOM!