

City of Newton - Council on Aging
Chairperson's Report 2011-2012 - Marian L. Knapp

Every year the COA does meaningful work in support NDSS staff, all Newton Seniors and their families. As, Chair, I contemplate the 2011 – 2012 Council on Aging accomplishments and would like to take a few minutes for us to feel pretty proud of what we have all done in the past ten months. You may have items to add.

- I first want to acknowledge Jayne Colino for her above-and-beyond capacity to handle all of the near and actual crises that befell the senior center this year – broken boilers, boiler blow-backs, emergency closings – she miraculously always holds it all together.
- I also acknowledge Joanne Fisher who will be retiring in August as Program Coordinator.
- I also acknowledge Jeanne Stolbach who will be stepping down as COA secretary
- Recruitment: In the fall of 2011 we completed an exceptional recruitment process and added eight new COA members. I acknowledge Ellen Krasney for her incredible work on the process – contacting potential members, setting up interview times, arranging interviewees, keeping track of all the details, and helping with the process by which people became appointees.

We developed a packet that outlines the formal COA recruitment process along with relevant forms and documents. We provided a copy to the Mayor.

- Web-Site: With City's IT department's help NDSS's web-site has an easier-to-use format.
- COA and NDSS information packet is completed. This is an important reference document for all current and future COA members. This packet includes information about both COA members and staff making it easier for people to know each other and how they contribute to the community. Again, thanks to Ellen Krasney for coordinating this and to Shirley Farnham, Ena Lorent (volunteer) who helped assemble the document.
- DSS Cards: All COA members have DSS cards which they use to record volunteer hours.
- COA Strategic Plan with facilitation by Mary O'Neil & Ingrid Wolfson from SOAR was developed in a 2 ½ day retreat. A pre-retreat survey of "stakeholders" was completed by COA members and NDSS staff. Retreat participants included representatives from COA, NDSS staff, NDSS volunteers, aldermen, city departments, & collaborating agencies such as Springwell. This plan will guide our future for the next three years. The initial draft is being read by COA members and "stake-holders" and will be completed by September 2012 as we begin our new season.

Even before we had a formal Strategic Plan, we knew that strengthening community connections and increasing awareness about issues of aging and available services would be important elements. With this in mind we achieved the following things.

- **Newton Free Library** – We made a wonderful connection with the NFL as we co-sponsored six programs with the overriding concept of "Life's Transitions: Future Focus" – to elders

and their families think about and plan for the future. Experts from the fields of aging in communities plus NDSS staff were presenters at these sessions, which were extremely well received. We have been invited back to run a series for the 2012-2013 season.

- **Newton TAB:** With our encouragement the TAB has increased coverage about aging issues.
- **New Arts Center** provided space for our Strategic Planning Retreat. There were conversations with the NA Center Director about potential collaborative activities.
- **Area Councils.** We developed relationships with Newton Area Councils or coalitions: Newton Highlands, Upper Falls, & Beautiful Newtonville. The goal is to have the “senior voice” represented at meetings when issues and decisions are discussed. We facilitated a connection between NHAC & the Recreation Dept. re a traffic light & access to Crystal Lake.

NDSS and COA had a booth at Newton Highlands Village Day.

To better understand “area councils” and groups that are working in their neighborhoods, we will develop a list of groups and contacts – Jo Edith Heffron will be helping.

The Mayor has suggested that City departments should be represented at Village annual events. The COA and the NDSS can be represented through the Mayor’s initiative.

- **City Committee Connections.** We have begun the process of having liaisons to relevant City/Aldermanic Committees. Holly Gunner, will be our liaison to the Transportation Advisory Group. We will work on representation on other groups including housing.
- **Community Issues Reports:** Several COA members attended and reported on meetings or presentations. Holly Gunner on Transportation, Joyce Picard on Housing, and Judy Fischbach on Parking.
- **Museum of Fine Arts.** Through Ruth Sherman’s and Diane Sostek’s initiative, we have a relationship with the MFA which began with a kick-off private trip and tour to the Art in Bloom exhibit. An article will be submitted to the TAB.
- **GBIO.** We participated in a forum organized by the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization on key Newton topics: Seniors; Affordable Housing; and Teen Stress. Jayne Colino was on the panel with the Mayor, Superintendent of Schools, and Director of Planning (?). We expect to develop an ongoing project with GBIO.
- **Boston College:** Jayne, Julie Norstrand (BC doctoral student) had an initial discussion with The Sloan Center on Aging & Work about potential future projects.
- **Guest Speaker:** Richard Parker, MD spoke to the COA on health care reform and its implications for seniors.

Through these endeavors we are creating real examples of how Seniors are contributing to community life in a pro-active and meaningful way!