



**Maryland Gerontological Association  
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# The Village Concept

- **Pioneered in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood in 2001**
  - **Created new model for how to age in community**
  - **Grassroots organization**
    - **Founders and board members ordinary citizens**
    - **Pre-existing strong sense of community**
    - **Upper middle class to affluent neighborhood**
- **NYT's article in 2006 galvanized interest in other communities across the country**



# The Village Movement

- **48 Villages now offering services**
  - 6 in D.C. alone
- **Hundreds more in some phase of organizing country-wide**
- **Each Village unique**
- **Village-To-Village Network launched 2010**
- **Expect next 15 years will see exponential growth in Villages**



# **Why So Much Interest in Villages?**



# Demographics of U.S. Aging: Projected Increases

- **By 2030, the U.S. population 65 years and older**
  - will be twice as large as in 2000
  - will have grown from 35 million to 71.5 million
  - will represent 20% of the total population
- **By 2050, the U.S. population 85 and over will grow from 5.3 million (in 2006) to nearly 21 million**



# Increased Geographic Mobility

- **Nearly 1/7<sup>th</sup> of American population moves in a given year**
  - **Families are scattered**
  - **Less intergenerational contact**
- **Estimated 7 million adults are long distance caregivers living an hour or more away from aging parents or others who need care**



# The Cultural Centrality of Home

- **90% of Americans 50 years and older**
  - Like where they live
  - Want to stay where they are
- **Fewer than 10% of people over 60 have actually moved their place of residence in the last five years**
- **More than 75% of Americans 65 and over own their own homes**



# The Home Environment as a Support to Aging

- **Constancy and predictability**
- **Meaning of home**
- **Place attachment**
- **Home as expression of one's life course**

Lawton, M. P. (1977), An ecological theory of aging applied to elderly housing, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 31(1)





# The Home Environment as a Problem with regard to Aging

- **Insufficient stimulation from new activities**
- **Insufficient ongoing compensation measures for loss or reduction in competency**
  - **Physical modifications difficult with existing housing stock**
  - **Insufficient access to needed services**
    - **1/5 of Americans over 65 cannot drive**



# Current Alternative Living Environments

- **Assisted Living Facilities, Continuing Care Retirement Communities, Nursing Homes**
  - **Not what consumers want, even if they need what they offer**
  - **Not going to be able to keep up with demand**
  - **Not inexpensive**



**Villages:  
New Model of  
Service Delivery  
to the Aging  
Population**



# Village At Home

- **One example of the Village Model**
- **Many elements are common to all Villages**
- **All Villages also unique to a degree**



# Mission of Village At Home

- **To build a supportive community to include all ages**
- **With a special focus on providing activities and services to older adults and persons with disabilities**
- **So that they may have the practical means and the confidence to lead full lives in their homes and neighborhoods**



# Community-Based

- **Access enhanced to existing community services**
- **Transportation a key component to improving access to community-based services**
- **Grassroots organization**
- **Members are neighbors**
- **Volunteers are neighbors**



# Neighbor-to-Neighbor Volunteers

- **Some Villages are “volunteer first”**
- **Some Villages use more paid staff**
- **Volunteers are screened and trained by the Village**
- **Volunteers can do as little or as much as they choose**
- **The volunteer experience per se functions as another Village service.**
- **Volunteers will be of all ages, including high school students**



# Consumer-Driven

- **Founded by Neighbors**
- **Run by Neighbors**
- **Responsive to Neighbors**





# Consumer-Friendly

- **Friendly “Village” atmosphere prevails**
- **“Customer Service” that actually works**



# Village as “Insurance”

- **Members encouraged to join and contribute ahead of need.**
- **If you want the Village to be there for you, you contribute by “paying forward” into the pool.**
- **Share the risk**
  - **Some members ultimately will use more benefits, others will use fewer.**



# Single Point of Access for Services

- **One call**
- **One email**
- **Trusted source for information, resources and referrals to services**
- **Concierge services: If the Village does not have the service a member requests, the Village will try to find that service**



# Trusted Vetted Vendors at a Discount

- Referrals only to proven providers
- Discounts negotiated with vendors
- Follow-ups to check member satisfaction
- Advocacy for the member if the vendor performs unsatisfactorily



# Core Values of Village At Home

- **Choice**
- **Control**
- **Community**



# **Merchant Discounts, Ticket Discounts**

- Local merchants and cultural venues offer discounts in exchange for**
  - Improved off-peak use of services by Village members**
  - Improved market visibility through Village publications and events calendars**



# Excellent Value

- **Volunteer services**
- **Discounted services**
- **Delay or prevention of use of expensive facility-based services**
- **Modest yearly membership fee, supplemented by contributions**



# Coordination of Services

- **Some care coordination exists in all Villages**
- **Some have staff social workers who function as care managers or care coordinators for more complicated cases**
- **Reduction in consumer frustration from dealing with fragmented, confusing array of services means members are more willing to ask for help**





# **Social, Cultural and Educational Activities**

- Full calendar of events**
- Activities specifically organized by the Village**
  - e.g. walking groups, interest groups, book groups, exercise or yoga classes, coffee get-togethers, dinner together at a local restaurant**
- Improved access to existing community cultural and social activities**
  - e.g. plays, symphony**



# **2009 AARP Research**

## **5 Common Reasons for Joining a Village**

- Desire to remain at home and stay in the community**
- Belief in the Village concept**
- Immediate need for Village services**
- “Insurance” in case of future needs for Village services**
- Neighborhood connections**



# **Top Village Services (from an informal poll of 8 existing Villages)**

- Transportation**
- Home repairs and maintenance**
- Convenience/concierge services**
- Technology support**
- Information & advice**
- Social activities and support**



# Villages are not for everyone!

- **One size does not fit all!**
- **Best fit is with middle to upper middle class economically, unless subsidized**
- **Not everyone up to the challenges of living at home while aging**



# 2009 AARP Research **Member satisfaction survey**

- **All members surveyed in the study said they are extremely or very satisfied with their Village.**
- Nearly all members surveyed said they are getting a “**good value for their money.**”
- Nearly all said they would **recommend that their family and friends join the Village.**



# Villages Improve Home Environment for Aging

- **Availability of new activities and social connections – Excellent ✓**
- **Access to services**
  - **Transportation – Excellent ✓**
  - **Affordability – Improved but still expensive ✓**
- **Home modifications for accessibility and safety – Needs improvement ✓**



# **Villages contribute to age-friendly, livable communities**

- Promote intergenerational living**
- Strengthen and extend informal existing neighborhood support networks**