2014 - 2019

PROGRESS REPORT

Lifelong Montclair
AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

Montclair, New Jersey
www.lifelongmontclair.org
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LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Mr. William Armbruster
Advisor, AARP Livable Communities Programs/
Community, State and National Affairs
AARP
601 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20049

February 6, 2020

Dear Mr. Armbruster,

On behalf of the Township of Montclair, I am honored to share our progress update for Montclair’s age-friendly action plan in order to fulfill the requirements of the World Health Organization (WHO) and AARP’s Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Initiative. We are proud of our achievements over these past five years, and we look forward to continuing our work with older residents and our partner agencies to make Montclair an even greater place to grow older.

Sincerely,

Robert Jackson
Mayor, Township of Montclair
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Montclair Township Council for their support:
Mayor Robert D. Jackson
Deputy Mayor Rich McMahon
Councilor-at-Large Robert J. Russo
First Ward Councilor William L. Hurlock, Esq.
Second Ward Councilor Robin Schlager
Third Ward Councilor Sean M. Spiller
Fourth Ward Councilor Renée E. Baskerville, M.D.

Thank you to the Montclair Senior Citizens Advisory Committee for their effort, vision, and sheer will.

Thank you to the 34 Lifelong Montclair partner organizations:
AARP West Essex Chapter 131; Adult School Department of the Montclair Public Library; Aging in Montclair (AIM); AngelaCares; Bike&Walk Montclair; Care About You; Connections at Home NJ; Chrlil Care; Clara Maass Medical Center; Crawford Crews American Legion Post #251; Eat, Play, Live Better; Garden State Equality; Hackensack Meridian Health Mountainside Medical Center; HOMECorp; HomeSharing; Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris Counties; Montclair Ambulance Unit; Montclair Art Museum; Montclair Community Farms; Montclair History Center; Montclair Inn; Montclair Memory Clinic; Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation; Montclair Public Library; Montclair State University; Norris McLaughlin, RSVP of Essex and Hudson Counties; Toni’s Kitchen; United Methodist Communities: PineRidge of Montclair; United Way of Northern NJ; Vanguard Medical Group; YMCA of Montclair

With thanks to Partners for Health Foundation for its initial support and ongoing contributions to the development of Lifelong Montclair.
Lifelong Montclair is an age-friendly initiative housed in the Township’s Department of Health & Human Services. It was initially established in 2014 through an initiative of the Partners for Health Foundation in collaboration with the Township’s Department of Health & Human Services. In 2016, the Township of Montclair created the Division of Senior Services/Lifelong Montclair, further cementing the age-friendly efforts within the Township.

The Division of Senior Services/Lifelong Montclair works in concert with our community partners to include older residents in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs and policies that complement Montclair’s existing resources. We seek to optimize existing programs and resources by encouraging collaboration and reducing redundant services and silos.

**LIFELONG MONTCLAIR TIMELINE**

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<th>FEBRUARY 2014</th>
<th>JUNE 2014</th>
<th>FEBRUARY 2015</th>
<th>JULY 2016</th>
<th>FEBRUARY 2018</th>
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<td>Partners for Health Foundation/ Township of Montclair Department of Health &amp; Human Services launch Aging in Place in Montclair</td>
<td>Aging in Place in Montclair is rebranded to Lifelong Montclair</td>
<td>Montclair joins the World Health Organization/ AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities</td>
<td>Montclair creates a Division of Senior Services/Lifelong Montclair in the Department of Health &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>Montclair’s age-friendly action plan is accepted by the World Health Organization/ AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities</td>
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LIFELONG MONTCLAIR
PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS
The Montclair Senior Bus Roundtable, which is comprised of older residents with a vested interest in the bus, guides the operation of the Township’s Senior Bus. The group meets monthly to collect feedback and make operational suggestions and decisions. The bus is operated by the local Transportation Management Association (TMA), EZ Ride, and the Roundtable's feedback loop is written into the contract to institutionalize their role.

Residents can arrange a ride from their home to various destinations in Montclair. The bus operates Monday through Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm. Its popularity has translated into a need to reserve rides well ahead of time.

"The bus has opened up doors for me, and I'm now able to get around. I can even use it to get to my job at the Art Museum."

"My sincere thanks for the Senior Bus. Drove all my life until my last car finally died this past May. I have personally introduced the bus to six people."

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The MILL is a core program of Lifelong Montclair and is a collaboration of partner organizations. It fosters opportunities to expand social connections and build knowledge and new skills for adults age 55+. Classes are free of charge thanks to funding from the Partners for Health Foundation, the Township of Montclair, and donations from the community, but registration is required. The MILL has grown exponentially since its launch in Spring, 2015.

From 2015 through 2019, there were 7399 registrations, representing a 421% increase.

There have been 281 classes to date, with almost double the number of classes per semester.

In the last semester of 2019, the first class filled 1 minute after registration opened, and 7 classes filled in 10 minutes.

“In addition to learning and growing, I've met some wonderful women and enjoy their friendship both in and outside of class. Thank you for the MILL program.”

“MILL classes have made an enormous difference in my retirement years. I would be very isolated without these opportunities to socialize and learn.”

MILL Buddies
One of the ways we've been able to handle the growth of the MILL while still keeping it financially sustainable is to move all registration online. In order to make the transition successful, we conducted training sessions and launched a buddy program.

MILL Buddies are MILL students who help fellow students register when registration opens. Buddies bring their own electronic devices to Edgemont Park House and assist walk ins. In return, the Buddies are guaranteed registration in the classes of their choice.
We celebrated Older Americans Month 2016 by kicking off Senior Activities at Edgemont Park House. Since that date, we have built a robust schedule of programming that includes volunteer-led classes and groups, MILL courses, and programs created in partnership with community organizations and individuals. Edgemont Park House is also a place where local residents can drop in to use wifi, have coffee, or meet up.

One of our cornerstone programs at Edgemont Park House was developed in partnership with Matthews and Company Realty. This monthly program features guest speakers who highlight the efforts of our community partners to improve each of the World Health Organization’s 8 Domains of Livability. We also partner with community businesses to provide complimentary lunches to the attendees. Most importantly, the majority of the program's time is set aside for attendees to ask questions of the speakers. Steve Matthews passed away in November, 2018, but we continue the series in his memory.

Sessions have included:

- Garden State Equality’s Pledge & Protect Program where participants found out more about GSE's health and wellness education and advocacy work for LGBT elders.
- Connections at Home New Jersey’s Technology for Homebound Seniors discussing how CAHNJ is addressing the needs of our home-bound older adults and their caregivers through innovation and evidence-based practices.

Participation has increased an average of 28% each year.
The mission of the Montclair Housing Action Group is to focus public awareness on our town’s growing housing needs and to advocate immediate and long-term remedies. We place emphasis on the most at-risk members of our community, seniors who wish to “age in place,” but we are also concerned for all persons of all ages who face the crisis of being priced out of their hometown.

We are committed to preserving our town’s ethnic and economic diversity while maximizing its affordability, accessibility, and walkability, the hallmarks of a thriving community. And while striving to maintain the dominant aesthetic of Montclair, we acknowledge the inevitability of change in population density and seek the form and scale to accommodate it appropriately and creatively.

Further, we seek to monitor and be able to contribute to all appropriate town agencies and officials in order to promote a wider range of housing options, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), “missing middles,” infills, and shared housing. We collaborate with other volunteer organizations with shared goals and interests.

The Montclair Housing Action Group endorses a development strategy that pairs growth and continuity.
Is your home ready
• if you break a leg?
• if you use a wheelchair or walker?
• if you sustain a sports injury?

These are the questions we posed as we promoted our Seminar on Universal Design: Seniorama 2019, highlighting that an environment might be disabling. Topics included an overview of the concept of Universal Design, architectural objectives in home design, and use of Universal Design in intentional community planning.

Featured speakers included:
• Steve Leone, AIA, LEEDap BD+C, Principal, Spiezle Architectural Group, Inc.
• Jack Carman, FASLA, RLA, President, Design for Generations, LLC
• Paul Sionas, AIA, ASLA, PP, Principal Architect, Sionas Architecture, P.C.
• Tom Toronto, President, Bergen County’s United Way

The sessions can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/-sKexoCtYNQ.
A transformative change has to be multi-faceted to succeed. More than five years ago, we set out to make Montclair more age-friendly. From the outset, we knew we had many unique community assets, such as a supportive governing body, a funding partner, and an energetic and informed Senior Citizens Advisory Committee. It was our intent to leverage those assets while we worked toward building upon them.

We initially focused on the low-hanging fruit to gain some early wins, while still tackling more difficult issues in order to gain momentum. From there we made significant progress in the domain of transportation, and we are working diligently to launch initiatives to address housing in our community.

We still need to work on transportation and housing, while continuing to address all 8 Domains of Livability. It takes time to counter ageism and to increase age-literacy. Transformation is ongoing, and culture change, while gradual, is foundational to our success and long-term impact.
In recognition of Older Americans Month, 2019, we launched Self Portraits: Faces of Aging. Thanks to funding from the Partners for Health Foundation and partnership support from the Montclair Art Museum, this initiative highlights self-portraits of older Montclair-area residents along with their reflections on what aging means to them. The goal of this project was to offset stereotypes around aging and highlight the talents and perspectives of older residents from throughout the Montclair area.

All of the portraits and quotes are featured at www.lifelongmontclair.org/facesofaging. Some artists also displayed their portraits at the Montclair Art Museum’s Free First Thursday in May. Banners were displayed in the Montclair Center Business Improvement District and Montclair’s South End Business District.
Why “Senior” of the Month? Maybe it would have been better to use Older Montclairian of the Month. Or something else entirely. But it was an intentional choice to include an age-identifier in the name of this program.

The purpose of using an age-identifier is to highlight the diversity and contributions of our older residents in order to offset stereotypes about older adults and reduce ageism. We are trying to change the narrative around aging and being older in Montclair as part of our commitment toward becoming a more age-friendly community.

We have featured 32 older residents so far, and we are continuously seeking nominations. Candidates are Montclair residents 55+ whose contributions to the community have helped Montclair be a great place to live, and, hopefully, an even greater place to grow older.

To view past and present Seniors of the Month, go to www.lifelongmontclair.org/sotm.
In November, 2018, we hosted the ChangingAging Tour, featuring geriatrician Dr. Bill Thomas. This three-day event was a success thanks to our partnerships with Montclair's Senior Citizens Advisory Committee, Valley Health System, AARP NJ, and other community partners. We distributed pre- and post-test surveys to assess any changes in attitudes toward Alzheimer's disease/dementia and ageism. We are currently collaborating with Montclair State University to publish these findings.
LIFELONG MONTCLAIR: LOOKING FORWARD

In order to best maximize our impact, we are going to use this upcoming year to reflect and determine more focused work in the 8 Domains of Livability so that we can return the following year with an update to our original action plan.

Not to worry; there are still many initiatives in progress to keep us from reflecting too idly.
APPENDIX
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