

The Committee on Aging in Bowdoinham
Report to the Selectboard on its First Year
2012 - 2013

Based on 2012 estimates from the American Community Survey, about 15%, or 432, of Bowdoinham's population is aged 65 or over, with 167 of those over 75. With the influx of retirees relocating to Bowdoinham, increased longevity, and the aging of the baby boomers, the number of older adults living in Bowdoinham is expected to triple in the next nine years.

Foundational principles of our work

Over the course of our first year, the Committee on Aging in Bowdoinham (COA) has developed several principles that guide our activities.

- We are part of a larger community and will collaborate and build on existing efforts wherever possible
- We are guided by the *Aging in Bowdoinham* report's findings and recommendations.
- We routinely solicit feedback from people who live here so that offerings are consistent with what folks say they need/want.
- We are careful and thoughtful about offering activities to avoid activities that cannot be continued over the long-term.
- We respect that all that occurs is solely on a volunteer basis and that COA members are not paid staff. We try not to overwhelm any one member with activities but rather build on interests and energy.
- We pursue grant opportunities as we become aware of these, assuring that any grant applications are consistent with the principles of this effort.
- We welcome others who wish to offer their skills and talents.
- We advocate for needs of seniors participating in other town events and activities. Sometimes simple things can make an event or service easier for seniors to participate – such as outside chairs at the Plant Sale and addressing accessibility concerns at the Library and the Town Office.

How the committee came to be

- **Summer 2012** – A Needs Assessment was done and the report, *Aging in Bowdoinham*, was written. Focus groups suggested that Bowdoinham needed to take the following steps to become a more aging-friendly community:
 1. *Increased Communication*—specifically, a regularly distributed list of social opportunities, town activities and opportunities for community involvement as well as information about the programs and services offered by the town to support aging in place.

2. *Information and Referral Source*—specifically, availability of a local resource person to help older residents access services located in and outside Bowdoinham that could promote aging safely in the community.
 3. *Develop Volunteer Base*—specifically, a person to develop, coordinate and administer a network of volunteers willing to give time to help older or disabled residents.
 4. *Promotion of Inclusiveness*—specifically, enhancement of a town environment promoting inclusiveness of all ages and abilities in all town-sponsored activities.
 5. *Development of a Senior Center, Community Building, or dedicated space* where older adults can socialize or participate in activities of interest to them.
- **Sept 2012** – an Informal meeting about aging in Bowdoinham was held and the Committee on Aging in Bowdoinham was formed as an advisory committee to the Selectboard.
 - **October/ November 2012** – Seven committee members and two alternates were sworn in. Current committee members are George Christopher, chair; Theresa Turgeon, vice chair; Gracia Woodward, secretary; Linda Jariz; Kathy Pszczolkowski; Peggy Muir; Martha Cushing; and alternate Jeanine Beaudoin; with Patricia Oh as advisor. (Please note: In January 2014, the Committee was expanded to 9 members with two alternates. Jeanine Beaudoin became a regular member, leaving one regular member vacancy and 2 alternate member vacancies).
 - Official meetings began, first monthly, then bi-monthly. The committee adopted the steps listed above as its priorities, with major focus on the first three.
 - The committee adopted the following statement of purpose: “Creating, where needed, a menu of opportunities to allow people to continue to live in town as they age.”

What we’ve done, when

- **January 2013** –
 - Bowdoinham Senior Center opened. At the opening day, Committee members presented information about the report and the goals of the Committee’s work and asked for feedback on areas of interest. We utilized this feedback to sponsor speakers after Village Seniors Luncheons. These luncheons are sponsored by the Second Baptist Church every 4th Thursday of the month.
 - The Senior Center is open on most Thursdays from 10 – 3 at the Second Baptist Church, staffed by Theresa Turgeon. The church has been extremely supportive of this effort.
 - In an effort to keep townspeople informed about our work, COA began contributing articles to each issue of the Bowdoinham Newsletter.
- **February** -
 - Met with Barry Lohnes, director of Region Ten Technical High School (still known as “Voc Tech”) to discuss services to seniors as one of the

employment options for students. Effective Sept 2013, the school has incorporated this emphasis into its curriculum. This effort was coordinated by Peggy Muir.

- In accord with recommendation #1 in the Report, we began distributing a monthly listing of local Activities and Resources for seniors, compiled by Linda Jariz. This is sent to our email list and is available at the Town Landing and Town Office.

- **March –**
 - Began planning for monthly movie showings at the Senior Center and for a senior exercise program.

- **April –**
 - Exercise Plus began on Thursdays at the fire station led by Kathy Pszczolkowski: strength, flexibility and balance exercises suitable for all ages that can be done standing or sitting. The class continues today. All of the equipment used in the classes was purchased by the instructors.
 - Walking group began, led by Martha Cushing and Linda Jariz.
 - We worked with Spectrum Generations on a grant application to the AARP Foundation. We did not get the grant.

- **May –**
 - Walking group had 5-7 people each week.
 - Home modification self-assessment tool put in Bowdoinham library.

- **June –**
 - A second session of Exercise Plus, based on popular demand, began on Tuesdays, led by Linda Jariz. As of October 2013, 25 individuals have participated in 17 classes.
 - At our request, outdoor seating was made available to people before the opening of the Plant Sale – traditionally there is a long line waiting to get in. (This reflects the Report’s recommendation #4.)
 - Patricia Oh led an eight-session Matter of Balance class with a total of nine participants attending. For their final project, participants assessed the Town Office with regard to safety and accessibility and presented their findings to Bill Post, who received their information enthusiastically and has already acted on several of their recommendations.
 - We held a feedback session on COA activities and received a lot of positive comments:
 - Delighted to have a place to bring my mom.
 - This has been really good – I’ve gotten to know a few good people in the community – had not participated in community previously.
 - Absolutely wonderful – exercise, socialization, getting out of the house.
 - Esp for a really small town, it’s great how many activities are going on
 - Should we continue? Yes, yes!

- I'm all for anything that is going to keep us around and healthy longer – MOB and exercise class. Can we have a class on nutrition?
- I get all my info from Facebook and I share it – I share info about lunches, etc.

- What else would folks like?
 - Trips scheduled -- free entry to the Botanical Gardens, the state parks, and elsewhere.

- **September –**
 - After a summer break, we resumed exercise and walking groups. Seven people came to the first walking group of the fall, led by Jeanine Beaudoin. It is on hold for the winter due to weather and will start up again in the spring.
 - 22 people participated in the Exercise Plus program.
 - At Celebrate Bowdoinham 2013 we were instrumental in getting additional seating provided throughout the waterfront. We staffed a table with information and resources for elders, including emergency Go-Bags and a home safety assessment tool. Our presence sparked several interesting conversations with adults who have concerns about their aging parents. (Recommendation#4). We heard requests for trips, a nutrition & weight loss group, and help with transportation.

- **October –**
 - A group from Bowdoinham COA visited the senior center in Litchfield to learn from their experience. Litchfield has a community center and 15 hours/week of paid staff to operate their senior center and organize activities for it. They have a packed schedule of activities three days a week at Litchfield's community center.
 - Bridge lessons began, every Monday until the end of the year. 5 students with instructors Martha Cushing and Glenna Morin.

- **November –**
 - A six-month Tai Chi for Better Balance class began, led by Kathy Pszczolkowski and Patricia Oh, with ten participants.
 - A CPR class was planned (\$50 per participant) for committee members so they are versed in emergency procedures.

Below is a list of speakers who have made presentations at the Senior Center following the monthly Village Seniors' luncheons at the Second Baptist Church. The audience has been between 25-40 people each time:

- Joel Merry, scams targeting elders and on-line safety
- Louise Gephart, mental health and aging
- Patricia Oh, home modifications and risk reduction strategies
- Jeanine Beaudoin, Native American artifacts found locally

- Marie Murray, local mushrooms

Here are the resident contact hours by activities/programs:

Activity	Participants	Contact Hours
Exercise Plus	25	272
Senior Center	37	306
Matter of Balance	6	192
Walking Group	10	112
Driving services	3	146
Bridge lessons/playing	6	64
Total		1092

Issues and Needs:

- 1) The Senior Center is not well attended during the times when no activities are scheduled. In order to make this a more viable resource, we need someone who will organize/schedule events and activities well in advance so that activities can be reflected in the monthly Activities and Resources announcement.
- 2) We cannot maintain the necessary communication without a central point of contact and someone to produce the monthly Activities and Resources, make connections regarding potential grants, schedule special events and field requests from other agencies.
- 3) While we have been successful in engaging about 60 residents, we know that more outreach should be done. We need staff time to develop a more comprehensive contact/e-mail list and to determine the needs of those not engaged in our activities to date, such as housebound seniors and those with significant mobility issues.
- 4) We have maxed out our volunteer resources and cannot do any further outreach or expansion, nor can we maintain the current level of activity without additional support.
- 5) ***Committee members and alternates volunteered 910 hours between Sept 2012 and the end of October 2013.*** Contributions averaged 79 hours per person. At \$22.14/hour (Independent Sector website's value of volunteer hours for 2012) 910 hours is an in-kind contribution of \$20,147.
- 6) Committee members will remain active. Any staff that is hired will not assume responsibility for all of the activities currently offered. COA members will

continue staffing the Senior Center, leading Exercise Plus, writing the article for the Bowdoinham Newsletter and much more.

- 7) We have been asked to add programs and activities that we don't have the capacity to do, such as transportation, trips, home assessments and home visits. We need help finding and coordinating volunteers to help with these.
- 8) We have not been able to get the word out about our activities to the extent that we should. We are not able to plan events far enough in advance to provide maximum publicity about them (in our Activities and Resources list, in the Bowdoinham Newsletter, on the town website, and elsewhere)

Proposed Job Description: Older Adults Services Coordinator (10 – 15 hours per week)

Job Responsibilities (10 hours per week total)

Coordinate activities: 3 hours per week

- Recruit/schedule speakers for luncheons
- Recruit/organize instructors/guides for Senior Center activities
- Coordinate and develop material for any special programs (such as Matter of Balance, etc.)
- Maintain schedule/organize Exercise Plus
- Organize and maintain storage of Committee resources and documents

Communication: 2.5 hours per week

- Build and maintain an e-mail and mailing list
- Produce and distribute monthly Activities and Resources publication
- Serve as point of contact for COA for outside resources
- Manage the Senior Center voice mail and responses
- Maintain up to date schedule and resources on the Town's website

Staff the Committee on Aging Meetings: 2.5 hours per week

- Work with Committee chair to develop agenda
- Record and file minutes, get signatures on finalized copies and follow-up on assigned tasks

Recruit Active Volunteers: 1 hour per week

- Find back-up leaders for COA activities (such as Exercise Plus and Senior Center)

Recruit, serve as liaison with and provide support for new volunteers leading new activities

Pursue Grant Opportunities: 1 hour per week

Expanded Responsibilities - Additional 5 hours per week

Coordinate trips/outings for seniors

Implement programs that assist seniors to maintain living situations

Develop and promote home safety assessment

Explore development of transportation program

Implement a visitor/call program

Note: Other line items minimally include: Travel, Equipment, Training