



**Age-Friendly Networking Meeting**  
December 4, 2024 | 1:30pm -3:00pm | TEAMS

Attendees: Robin Riley (Co-Chair, MCRD); James Bridgers (Co-Chair, DHHS)

Pazit Aviv (Villages); Elizabeth Barnes (Easter Seals); Jennene Blakely (Parks); Shawn Brennan (Age Friendly Program Manager); Lauren Byers (A&D); Adriane Clutter (MCRD); Lisa Cook (MSW student); Kelly Davis (State's Attorney's Office); Jean Dinwiddie (COA); David Engel (COA); Cynthia Grissom (WorkSource Montgomery); Peter Illig (A&D); Denise Isreal (MC Transportation); Kimberly Johnson (Area Agency on Aging); Ruth Kershner (Caregiving); Morris Klein (COA); Marci LeFevre (Hyattsville AF); Mariela Leon (MCPD); Carl Morgan (Planning); Kathleen Liebersen (MCRD); Sibio Ncube (COA and home care agency); Cathy Nestoriak (JCA Employment); Lindsay Niemoller (MC Volunteer Center); Laurie Pross (COA); Marcia Pruzan (former AF program manager); Stuart Rosenthal (Beacon Newspapers); Natasha Sacks (Lifelong Learning); Monica Schaeffer (AF Employment); Stacy Sigler (MCRD); Charlyn Simpson (City of Gaithersburg); April Stup (Partners in Care); Sara Swarr (MCRD); Mary Sweeney (COA and Charles E. Smith Life Communities); Janine Tursini (Arts for the Aging); Patricia Vitale (Consumer Protection); Marsha Weber (COA alumnus).

**Ice Breaker:** Share something you are proud to have been a part of, something that has enabled older adults to live more fully in Montgomery County. **Here is what attendees shared:**

**Ruth Kershner (A&D):** Was interviewed by Commission on Aging (COA) member Katie Smith for the 50+ cable program.

**Kathleen Liebersen (REC):** The work I do with the Active Aging Signature Event and promoting all the variety of programs going on that week.

**Denise Israel (DOT):** To bring awareness to transportation options available in Montgomery County, I conducted outgoing outreach events and presentations at venues where older adults live and or gather, including senior fairs, Recreation Centers, community & County Events, and senior residential facilities.

**Natasha Sacks:** I teach a class on Retirement for the Lifelong Learning Institute at Montgomery College and organized classes at MC.

**Marcia Pruzan:** I am proud of being involved with Age Friendly at the start of our County's Age Friendly initiative--and to know it's still going strong at the ten-year mark! I also love doing COA ambassador outreach programs in the community! On a different note, I was glad to have the knowledge to help a distressed commercial driver who had witnessed elder abuse of a client by advising him to call APS or the 3000 line. He was grateful to be able to take care of a bad situation

**Charlyn Simpson:** I am proud to have created and facilitated programs that give people the opportunity to try new things and learn something new.

**Kelly Davis:** I am proud to hold criminals accountable for abusing and exploiting our older and vulnerable adults and for our outreach and our annual WEAAD event!

**Sara Swarr (REC):** I like collaborating with others to maximize what we offer the community, such as Active Aging Week, WEAAD, TechConnect, coffee with a cop, nutrition, and more.

**Mariela Leon (POL):** I initiated a platform called *Voces Importantes* that empowers women to discuss their experiences, including mental health, domestic violence, and rape. The platform started with six ladies and has grown to 80, highlighting its success and impact.

**Not clear who said this:** I have been a caregiver for 10 years for my mother, who now has been in hospice for 1 year. I am proud of advocating for a different perspective on the expectations and experiences of being a caregiver, particularly regarding the changing of aides, and for sharing feedback with a social worker and charge nurse; this was impactful, as many families do not speak up about this issue.

**Adrian Clutter (REC):** I have helped the deaf community in aging-related issues at Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center and HHS, sharing resources with partners.

**Charlyn?:** I took a group of seniors to early voting and experienced the joy of seeing new citizens vote for the first time.

**Janine Tursini (Arts for the Aging):** I attended the Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC) Gala, where Arts for the Aging won the HOC's Shauna Sorrells Award. We also received a multi-year grant to continue working with HOC to identify residents in HOC communities to become teaching artists.

**Sibo Ncube:** For Christmas, my garden club will decorate the Byron House in Potomac. We bring and serve lunch for the residents and staff.

### **History & Orientation to Age Friendly Montgomery**

- Montgomery County has been designated as an Age Friendly community for 10 years and is part of a global initiative originating from the World Health Organization (WHO) and overseen in this country by AARP. WHO recognized that people are living longer worldwide and communities need to respond to the dramatic demographic changes to ensure that individuals lead healthy, vibrant, and integrated lives throughout their lifetimes.
- The Maryland Secretary of Aging initiated the Longevity Ready Maryland Initiative. The Governor issued an executive order to ensure that state agencies create plans and policies for older adults. This includes a multi-sector plan that will involve not just the government, but also nonprofits and business communities. The draft Longevity Ready Maryland plan will be available for public comment in the spring of 2025.
- Age-friendly Network meetings are held every other month and are open to anyone who is interested. There are [10 Age Friendly work groups](#). Co-leaders and members of each group, 2 encouraged to attend these meetings.
- Age-Friendly spurred the creation of the Senior website within the County government's website: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/senior).

### ***The Age Friendly Network discussed plans for the Age Friendly 10-Year Anniversary in 2025.*** **The following ideas were discussed:**

#### **Reengage Senior Leadership**

- Plan to reengage senior leadership, including the County Executive, department directors, and councilmembers who were initially involved.

- Reach out to municipalities as well.

### **Increase Department Directors' Support for the Age Friendly Initiative**

- Robin suggested improving directors' engagement by rotating focus topics or providing information monthly.

### **Highlight Accomplishments in the Beacon**

- Encourage workgroup leaders and department directors to highlight AF accomplishments in the Beacon newspaper.

### **Celebrate the 10-Year Anniversary**

- Shawn suggested a 10-year anniversary Age Friendly Logo for 2025 and a calendar of events to highlight AF throughout the year.
- Work with the Council to create a proclamation.
- Incorporate a panel discussion or slideshow for the 2025 Beacon Expo to highlight AF achievements over the past 10 years.

### **Create Social Engagement Opportunities for Older Adults**

- Focus on social engagement as a theme in December, 2025.
- Encourage holding both in-person and virtual activities.

### **Host an employment open house at the JCA to promote programs supporting older workers.**

### **Hold a Logo and/or Poster Contest:**

- Logo should be short, simple, and visually appealing.
- Incorporate Age Friendly branding and the “10 years” milestone.
- Capture the spirit of aging positively with short animated GIF logo.
- Create a community-involved contest to illustrate the Age Friendly initiative.
- Encourage participation of multi-generational residents. Engage academic institutions like Montgomery College.

**Jim Resnick shared sad news about recent fire fatalities and reminded the group that residents can call 311 to request a free Home Safety Check by MC Fire and Rescue.**

### **Action Items:**

- Plan a panel discussion at the 2025 Beacon Expo highlighting Age Friendly.
- Form a small committee to develop the contest, determine criteria, and explore partnerships.
- Coordinate with Beth Shuman of Councilmember Alborno's office for the proclamation.

### **Future Meetings:**

- Keep an eye open for 2025 meeting invitations.
- Include speakers on topics like accessibility, social isolation, and funding for future Age Friendly meetings.