

Golden



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY SERVICES

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Gazette

SPECIAL EDITION: SHAPE THE FUTURE OF AGING

SHAPE The Future of Aging: Year One

by Elizabeth Margetta, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

This special edition of the Golden Gazette was created to provide an update and overview of the work done over the course of the first year of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan. SHAPE is a five-year strategic plan which the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) officially approved on May 23, 2023. The plan supports continuing efforts to make the Fairfax area an excellent place to age well. The first annual report was provided to the BOS at the Older Adults Committee Meeting on May 14, 2024. A selection of the initiatives that were developed and reported to the BOS at that meeting will be highlighted in this special edition.

SHAPE is an acronym with five domains that significantly impact the life of an older adult:

- ◆ The “S” in SHAPE is for “Services for Older Adults, People with Disabilities and Family Caregivers,” which includes caregiver support and dementia friendly resources.
- ◆ The “H” is for “Housing and Neighborhood Supports,” which includes affordable housing, home modifications, home maintenance, villages, and livable communities.
- ◆ The “A” is for “Access to Mobility Options,” which includes transportation, mobility support, and walkability.
- ◆ The “P” is for “Personal Well-being,” which includes community engagement, isolation, public and mental health, and nutrition.
- ◆ The “E” is for “Economic Stability and Planning,” which includes financial stability, exploitation, employment, end of life, and business partnerships.

In preparation for the development of the SHAPE Plan, the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) sought community input through both a nationally benchmarked survey, the “Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults” (CASOA) in 2022, and a series of community gatherings and forums. As part of the implementation of

SHAPE the Future of Aging

the SHAPE Plan, Initiative Development Committees (IDCs) were formed for each SHAPE category and were facilitated by members of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging with support from the Fairfax AAA. The IDCs were created to provide input on how to implement the recommendations in the SHAPE Plan. The IDCs met over the course of the last year to identify and operationalize initiatives. Once initiatives were identified, they were vetted by the Department of Family Services’ (DFS) Data Analytics team to ensure they had strong objectives and measures. IDCs also conducted an equity analysis review of each initiative. (Read more about the equity analysis review on P. 2)

One of the themes that came out of the community input phase was that, while there is an array of county services available to older adults, awareness in the community is low. The “S” Committee is conducting a market research initiative to learn how older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers in the Fairfax area seek information about DFS’ Adult & Aging (A&A) resources. Understanding how they receive information about services will improve the effectiveness of a campaign to increase community awareness of A&A services. It will also enhance how information is shared with the community about the SHAPE committees’ initiatives over the course of the SHAPE Plan.

Another “S” initiative seeks to use existing outreach vehicles such as ServiceSource’s “CARE Mobile” to extend the reach of the Fairfax AAA’s Caregiver Unit and A&A resource information to the community. Information from the market research will drive the next phase of the work by helping to determine possible strategies to improve outreach in the community.

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Two additional initiatives developed in the “S” Committee seek to further understand the needs in the disability community:

- ◆ A long-term initiative will create a comprehensive community needs assessment specifically targeting individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ The Commission on Aging will co-facilitate community forums with the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board this year to understand the gaps in services in Fairfax County for adults with disabilities in discussions that align with the SHAPE categories.

Initiatives from the “H” Committee include promoting awareness of the existing home sharing guide, “A Consumer’s Guide to Home Sharing,” and the creation of a consumer resource guide for home repairs and modifications to support Fairfax area adults aging in place. The guide will be developed in partnership with the nonprofit Rebuilding Together-Arlington/Fairfax/Falls Church.

The “A” Committee is working on initiatives to support targeted outreach of transportation resources in partnership with Fairfax County Public Library. They are also pursuing an initiative to study volunteer recruitment in partnership with the nonprofit NV Rides.

An initiative to obtain SAGE Cultural Competency Certification for AAA was developed by the “P”

Committee. SAGE, a provider of Advocacy and Services to LGBTQ+ Elders, is a national advocacy and services organization that has developed a cultural competency curriculum to educate providers about best practices in providing care for adults who identify as LGBTQ+.

Two initiatives that came from the “P” and “E” SHAPE committees are being implemented in senior centers in Fairfax. One will offer financial planning seminars developed in partnership with the Financial Empowerment Center (a program of the nonprofit Britepaths). The second initiative being offered at several area senior centers is a pilot of the StrongerMemory Program, a brain health and social wellness program developed by Goodwin Living. (Read more about the Financial Empowerment Center initiative on P. 3.)

Another initiative that was developed out of the “E” Committee is focused on promoting awareness of Silver Shield Anti-Scam prevention through broad community outreach.

Some of the initiatives shared here are in the early stages of implementation. Progress updates will be detailed in future annual reports to the BOS at the Older Adult Committee meetings. For more information about the CASOA and the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan, please visit bit.ly/SHAPEtheFutureofAging. 🌟

Building Strong Initiatives with an Equity Focus

by Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

In keeping with Fairfax County’s One Fairfax policy, all SHAPE programs and initiatives must consider equity in the initiatives that are proposed. Equity is the commitment to promote fairness and justice for all residents, regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status or neighborhood of residence or other characteristics.

As the SHAPE Committees built initiatives, they took time to apply an equity lens to their developing ideas to ensure that equity was a foundational concept in the implementation phase of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan. The committees participated in guided discussions using the Department of Family Services (DFS) “Equity Analysis Framework for Proposed DFS Policy and Business Process Changes” as a model to evaluate if the

initiatives were unintentionally creating barriers for communities who have

inequitable access and opportunity. The committees also talked about how to enhance initiatives to ensure access. As an example, when working on a brain health initiative, the committee learned about the higher prevalence of memory loss in two populations. This discussion informed the approach to target services to those in need with higher incidence of memory loss. The classes will still serve any participant and the equity review process uncovered target areas to help grow and guide the initiative to meet an identified need.



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Using Virtual Reality to Help Caregivers Better Understand Older Adults

by Gwen Jones, Department of Family Services

A long-term “S” SHAPE initiative that is supported by ElderLink, a partnership program between the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and Inova, is the “Exploring the Dimensions of Aging through Virtual Reality,” an Embodied Labs Pilot. This AAA-led initiative seeks to build empathy and understanding to support caregivers in their roles.



This pilot offers facilitated virtual sessions using an immersive training platform that allows participants to “see through the eyes” of older adults who are facing real-life challenges to their safety and well-being, experiencing social isolation or other chronic health conditions like Lewy Body Dementia and Parkinson’s.

Participants are asked to complete brief electronic surveys before and after the sessions so ElderLink can evaluate the training’s impact. Initial feedback indicates that the initiative is making a difference. For example, early feedback for the Frank Lab, which focuses on social isolation and its impact, shows that after the training participants report a better understanding of the topic as well as increased confidence in being able to recognize and address social isolation among older adults.

Register online for Exploring Dimensions of Aging Labs at: tinyurl.com/exploring-aging.

To inquire about a private training session for a community organization, please contact Deme Warner, 703-237-6027, Demetra.Warner@fairfaxcounty.gov. 🌟

A Focus on Financial Literacy

by Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging

The SHAPE “Economic Stability and Planning” Initiative Development Committee is composed of members of the Commission on Aging, county staff from various departments, non-profits, community members and experts in the field. In the SHAPE Plan, this committee was tasked with how they could increase awareness and education on the topic of financial security to prevent and reduce economic distress of older adults.



as scams targeting older adults, paying medical bills, budgeting on a fixed income, top budget busters and an introduction to online and mobile banking. The group will pilot the seminars in Neighborhood and Community Services senior centers and hope to offer the sessions throughout the county.

The committee partnered with Britepaths, the lead nonprofit partner with the United Way of the National Capital Area, who along with Fairfax County, manages the Financial Empowerment Center at the South County Community Center. The committee helped develop financial planning seminars, specifically designed for older adults, to better prepare them for a financially secure retirement. The seminars focus on topics such

The strength of partnerships is evident in the initiative’s ability to provide relevant and practical content. The partner nonprofit is able to ensure sustainability and provide deeper support such as multilingual presenters and a follow up consultation. The other committee members provide connections to county resources, subject matter expertise and real-life stories, adding value to the work and ensuring that the seminar content is relevant and useful to older adults. This initiative is just one example of the collaborative nature of the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan. 🌟

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The discussions brought together Commissioners, staff, non-profit organizations and community partners, to learn about the One Fairfax equity framework, and to practice discussions on equity as committees reviewed the budding ideas. This process started to create a common understanding about equity as it relates to shaping the strategic plan for people 50 and over and people with disabilities in the community.

Equity discussions are not a one-time activity and require a multi-faceted approach. While intentionally putting the equity lens at the beginning of the planning process, the committees will continue to consider equity throughout the process of developing initiatives. We are building a collective muscle – it takes time, commitment and learning. We are building capacity, ensuring equitable outcomes, challenging assumptions and amplifying voices. ✨

Want to learn more about the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan?

Visit bit.ly/SHAPetheFutureofAging to:

- ◆ View the SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan
- ◆ Listen to a County Conversation Podcast about SHAPE
- ◆ Learn about the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults (CASOA)
- ◆ Get the latest news and updates about SHAPE

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