

River Forest Township  
 Senior Outreach Coordinator  
 Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2016  
 2017 Annual Town Meeting, 4/18/2017

Last year, in FY 2015, the Township funded a new part-time position (Senior Outreach Coordinator, or “SOC” hereafter), to further assist its local senior citizens. The Township hired Cathaleen Roach as an independent contractor to work between 10 – 15 hrs./week. In this second year of funding, FY 2016, Ms. Roach focused primarily on three areas: programming initiatives for lifelong learning and health & safety; senior outreach; and collaboration with other local entities.

Ms. Roach reports directly to Supervisor Carla Sloan. In addition to being part-time Township SOC, Ms. Roach attends all OP&RFT Senior Committee Meetings and volunteers bi-weekly with the year-old Low-Income Senior Advanced Directive Clinic, which she and the Center for Disability and Elder Law (CDEL) coordinate. This legal clinic serves River Forest and Oak Park seniors who qualify.

**LPROGRAMMING INITIATIVES: LIFELONG LEARNING AND HEALTH & SAFETY**

**A. PROGRAMMING For LIFELONG LEARNING**

River Forest Township has enjoyed a great working relationship with the River Forest Public Library, particularly through their limited joint partnership created two years ago. In FY 2016 this partnership brought a tremendous increase in free programming available to local RF seniors in large part through its “Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”™ efforts. Local seniors have responded enthusiastically. In addition to the co-sponsorship of Library programming, RF Township co-sponsored Wednesday Computer Labs and monthly Coffee Monday programs, each of which is described below.

- A total of 816 people attended 19 events co-sponsored by River Forest Township and River Forest Library between May 2016 and April 2017 under the programming called “Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”™ programming. Especially popular were author visits (like that of local author Jane Hamilton in May); local historian Al Popowitts on River Forest historical buildings; a program on “downsizing”; and travel programming with Time Life photographer Bill Helmuth who, with his photographs and presentations, took attendees “Down the Amazon” and to the Holy Land in FY 2016.
- In FY 2016, the Township continued its co-sponsorship with the River Forest Library of weekly free Computer Labs. These labs were typically conducted as eight-week sessions with a two-week break in between each session. A total of 190 duplicated participants

(i.e., some attending regularly) attended our weekly Computer Labs in FY 2016. Local seniors– at any computer competency level – are invited to come in for assistance with questions of their own about laptops, tablets and other related electronics.

Additional expanded plans for our Computer Labs in FY 2017 include possibly adding sessions on family genealogy; how to research the history of our individual River Forest homes via an address; additional senior training on selecting “tablets” v. “laptops”; and tutorials for seniors on “tablet” instruction and on-line access to River Forest Library tools.

- In addition to CSAYL programming and the weekly Computer Labs, the Township co-sponsored with the River Forest Library once-a-month Coffee Mondays with opportunities for socializing and some limited content programming for seniors. Coffee Monday topics included:
  - Librarian selections on “Books you will Love in the New Year.”
  - Abraham Lincoln Celebration as part of Presidents’ Month.
  - Volunteer Opportunity Day – Introducing local seniors to age-appropriate volunteering opportunities with OP&RF Food Pantry; OPRF Animal Care League; and OPTSS’ Money Management and Meals on Wheels opportunities.
  - Introduction to Arbor West Neighbors Cooperative.
  - Librarians Mary Kay Aikers-Stiff & Dana Janisch on “Hot Summer Reads” on selections and recommendations and “Fiction that Reads like Non-Fiction.”

In FY 2016 The Township co-sponsored 11 Coffee Mondays, averaging 12 – 20 members in attendance. Local coffee shop, The Blue Max, provided free coffee for every event. Most popular were our presentations with Abraham Lincoln (local historian and edu-tainment provider, Kevin Wood) and our “Volunteer Opportunity Day” wherein seniors responded enthusiastically to the idea of “service” aiding successful aging.

#### CELEBRATING SENIORS WEEK™ PROGRAMMING –

In FY 2016, the SOC spent a great deal of time representing RF Township in the May 2016 Celebrating Seniors Week™ programming (hereafter, “CSW”), which was the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual CSW event and has become quite popular in the region. Thereafter, beginning January 2017 the SOC also spent a great deal of time preparing for the following May 2017 Celebrating Seniors Week, (the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual event), where the Township plans on hosting, co-hosting or assisting with a record nine local events in one week May 18 – 25, 2017.

**May 2016** – Celebrating Seniors Week. CSW is a tri-suburban effort with Oak Park, Forest Park and River Forest and in May 2016 provided over 40 free local events for seniors in one week, with River Forest Township hosting or co-hosting five events at RFCC. In FY 2016 the SOC attended numerous planning meetings for the May 2016 CSW events, and we significantly “upped” River Forest Township’s participation and profile with the CSW events. River Forest Township co-sponsored the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual CSW and contributed financially and with personnel towards its success. In River Forest, at the RFCC and as part of the May 2016 CSW, the SOC conducted a popular “Memoir Writing: Getting Started” seminar; and co-hosted a well-

attended Advanced Directives (Legal) Seminar with guest speaker Tom Wendt from Chicago's Center for Disability & Elder Law ("CDEL"). Other local RF events included the 5K Run (held at Concordia University) and "The Battle of the (senior) Bands," held on a Friday night at the RFCC. The SOC and Supervisor marshalled selected River Forest residents for recognition as part of the "60 Over 60" honorees and represented the Township in a well-regarded concluding luncheon featuring popular radio host Bruce DuMont.

**May 2017** – River Forest Township and the SOC have worked equally industriously with this year's CSW, which is scheduled in a few weeks for May 18 -25, 2017. Once again, we have worked hard to locate and celebrate our residents as part of the "60 Over 60" honorees, including two River Forest residents who are or approach 100 years of age. We expanded programming to add a very exciting "Movement and Memory for Joyful Aging" class, which promotes healthy aging through movement that challenges balance and repetition (memory) and all while using music from the 1940's and 1950's. Other local planned events with River Forest Township participation for May 2017 include:

- **Thursday, 5/18, 9:30 am, RF Community Center (RFCC)** – IL Secretary of State *Rules of the Road and Mobile Drivers Unit/Vision Screening.*
- **Friday, 5/19, 10:30 am, RFCC** – *Advanced Directives for Later Life Planning: Powers of Attorney for Property & Healthcare...and Why We Need Them* with Tom Wendt.
- **Friday, 5/19, 3 pm, RFCC** – *Falls Prevention* with Synergy Home Care/Nick Preys.
- **Friday, 5/19, 7 pm, RF Public Library (RFPL)** – *Terry Sullivan Trio Intimate Jazz Concert.*
- **Sunday, 5/21, 2 pm, Roosevelt Middle School** – *Best-selling local author Elizabeth Berg.*
- **Monday, 5/22, 1 pm, RF Village Hall** – *Protecting You and Your Loved Ones* with RF Police Officer Glen Czernik.
- **Monday, 5/22, 7 pm, RFPL** – *RF Historic Homes II* with Al Popowits.
- **Wednesday, 5/24, 2 pm, RFCC** – *Memoir Writing: Getting Started* with Cathaleen Roach.
- **Thursday, 5/25, 1 pm, RFCC** – *New! Movement & Memory for Joyful Aging* with Gloria Araya.

## **B. PROGRAMMING For HEALTH & SAFETY**

River Forest Township did two things regarding Health & Safety issues and programming: 1) It rolled-out and locally distributed its very popular "ICE Packets" which was the culmination of a months'-long effort with the River Forest Fire Department and Paramedics; and 2) It continued with other Health & Safety programming for local residents.

**DISTRIBUTION OF ICE PACKETS** - Approximately 1100 packets locally distributed in one year!

- FY 2016 - After months of research and preparation in FY 2015, together with the RF Fire Department (and RF Paramedic Dave Bochenek), RF Township launched its "ICE Packet" project, providing up to 1500 ICE Packets to local area seniors for free. These

packets are named for “In Case of Emergency” wherein seniors fill out Township-provided Medical Information Forms (describing contact and key medical information and medicines they take and/or are allergic to; and prepared with RF Fire Department) and place in Township-provided ICE Packets into a resident senior’s freezer. Also, a specially ordered Township/Fire Department decal is placed on the senior’s freezer/refrigerator door to alert paramedics to the available information in the senior’s freezer. In crisis situations, when on an emergency visit to the senior’s home, these packets get our local paramedics to the senior’s vital medical and contact information quickly.

- This project proved enormously popular with our seniors. The SOC and Supervisor attended summer block parties and many local events to distribute the ICE Packets. Local condominium and apartment buildings with seniors were designated for distribution. The project proved so popular that within the year, our friend and neighbor, Forest Park, created and distributed a similar product for its seniors!

#### OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMMING -

- We continue to see River Forest residents for preparation of health care and property powers of attorney at the Seniors Advanced Directives (free) Clinic, staffed twice-monthly by Cathaleen Roach (on volunteer time) and CDEL, the Chicago Center for Disability & Elder Law.
- In just a few weeks we will have or co-host May programming dealing with Advanced Directives (legal); Elder Scams (sponsored by RF Police Dept.); Falls Prevention and Movement and Memory for Joyful Aging.
- Township Supervisor Carla Sloan continues to work on behalf of seniors and healthy aging with her project on Caregiver Support. In FY 2016 Ms. Sloan and Concordia’s Lydia Manning launched a jointly-sponsored Caregiver Support Group which meets twice-monthly on campus at Concordia University. Supervisor Sloan’s project provides open access to qualifying River Forest residents who are caregivers, and who meet in a support group with CU employee caregivers.

## II. OUTREACH

In addition to programming initiatives (for Lifelong Learning and Health & Safety), the second prong of the Township’s commitment to its seniors involves its outreach efforts.

- TOWNSHIP DAY September 2016 - On Wednesday, September 21, 2016 Supervisor Carla Sloan hosted the first-ever Township Day event at the RFCC. We incorporated delightful “Circus” and “Patriotic” themes, inviting local seniors to come for wonderful live music performed by a jazz combo and an information fair with detailed information tables and knowledgeable providers. We filled the gymnasium with patriotic red, white and blue decorations. Our local paramedics were our much-admired “Celebrity Scoopers” who dished out sundaes provided by local favorite, Brown Cow Ice Cream Shoppe. Residents of all ages enjoyed ice cream, great music and lots of useful

information on Township services like transportation, meals, dining-out programs, and other social services made available to our seniors.

- As reported above, we made a big push in FY 2016 to get 1100 ICE Packets distributed to local seniors, which were very favorably received.
- Regular Meeting Commitments – The SOC (Senior Outreach Coordinator) attended meetings and provided status reports for the following :
  - Monthly - RF Township Board meetings
  - Quarterly - OPRF Township Seniors Committee meetings
  - Other -- SOC maintains bi-monthly, the RFCC Senior Board on 1<sup>st</sup> Floor; the RFCC Senior Bulletin Board on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor; the RF Library Senior Board; and two dedicated display racks, or “trees” at RF Village Hall and 1<sup>st</sup> floor RFCC. All of these boards and racks provide lots of handouts and timely information for events of interest to our local seniors.
- SOC is present for drop-in office duty Wednesdays 1 – 3 p.m.
- Constituent calls: SOC has seen an increase in senior constituent calls (now regularly numbering several every week), which vary for anything from transportation calls, to caregiving concerns, to questions about free income-tax preparation, to bridge club and other social inquiries. (See next section on “Collaboration”). We attribute this positive development to our Celebrating Seniors All Year Long™ activities, and our increased print and local presence by the Township.
- The Township is also now regularly approached for publicity help as a liaison between our local seniors and other programming providers including but not limited to: OPRFHS for musical plays; Encore for senior choir groups; The Willard PTO for A Senior Tea with the school children; and tax preparation efforts for volunteers and clients. (See next section on “Collaboration”).
- Media Outreach - The Township plays an important role in connecting its local seniors with local events and local groups of interest through many forms of media and other electronic outreach. The Township:
  - Takes photos at CSAYL™ Library events and coordinate pictures and copy with Matt Baron, Inside Edge, for placement in local outlets.
  - Works with Jeff Belmonte providing Senior Services news for website at rftownship.org.
  - Works with Dana Ferdinand (OPTSS) providing copy for RF Township in quarterly News & Views (sent to targeted River Forest and Oak Park seniors).
  - Sends out Monthly email blasts to local seniors advising of upcoming programming, particularly Coffee Mondays and CSAYL (“Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”s).
  - Works with Dana Janisch and Francesca Arnold at River Forest Library creating promotional posters and outreach materials for all co-sponsored events.
  - Works with Supervisor Sloan in promoting Township events and services in RF Village E-news; “News & Views” (OPTSS); RF Public Library Book Plate; RFCC brochure and electronic newsletter; RF Park District Fun Guide; and thereby greatly increasing the public awareness of local events of interest to and affecting seniors.

- The SOC created hundreds of “senior packets” describing RF Township available senior services for Assessor’s Office to provide to seniors with in-person appointments.
  - Other outreach efforts:
- HALE Appearance - Represented River Forest Township at March 2017 HALE (Health and Longevity Expo) at the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Club, an information expo sponsored by OPRF Senior Citizen’s Center.
  - Age Options Legislative Breakfast - Represented RF Township on January 30, 2017 at LaGrange Aging Care Connections Legislative Breakfast for local federal, state, and others to discuss acute situation in federal and IL state funding of senior social services.
  - April 24, 2016 (and forthcoming April 26, 2017) - Participate in Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation’s highly successful Volunteer Meet and Match event at the Oak Park Public Library (over 400 persons attended in 2016).

### **III COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OTHER ENTITIES**

Senior Services spent much of this fiscal year 2016 creating and maintaining collaborative working relationships with the following local government and other entities:

- RF Library – Co-sponsored numerous programming events, weekly Computer Labs and monthly Coffee Mondays.
- RF Fire Department-
  - ICE Packet, creation and distribution locally.
  - IL Township Day, guest ice cream scoopers.
- RF Police Department – Will support May 2017 CSW presentation on Senior Scams
- Oak Park Township Senior Services - We work intimately with OPTSS in connecting needy RF senior residents with available services.
- CDEL- Center for Disability and Elder Law- Support bi-monthly free legal clinic for Advance Directives for qualifying local residents.
- Senior Lifelong Learning/OP & RF Seniors Center (located at Oak Park Arms), including representing RF Township at the annual HALE expo.
- Forest Park Mohr Community Center- Promote senior tour events.
- Churches and other religious institutions including River Forest Methodist, Grace Lutheran Church and West Suburban Temple Har Zion and Oak Park Temple’s STAR group.
- Concordia University (Carla Sloan Caregiving Project)
- Encore – Actively promote newly formed 40-person senior choir ensemble based on national model.
- Arbor West – Actively promote and assist newly formed tri-suburban not-for-profit group on successful aging in place including publicity, assistance with surveys, and their big event featuring Atul Gwande, MD., now rescheduled for summer 2017.
- Triton RSVP and AARP Tax Preparation – Assist in finding volunteers for training in tax preparation AND publicize tax assistance for qualifying local seniors.

- Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation Volunteer Meet and Match Event held every April.

#### **IV. FUTURE PLANS**

Senior Services makes a point of listening to its constituents and honoring their helpful suggestions for additional programs for the future. With that goal in mind, Senior Services would like to contribute even more meaningfully in FY 2017 by investigating the following areas for possible broader outreach next year:

- Complete our successful outreach to up to 1500 local RF senior citizens in publicizing and distributing the new ICE Packets (“In Case of Emergency” packets).
- Expand our relationship with the RF Police Department and Community Bank for more seminars teaching senior residents about active local scams against seniors.
- Expand relationship with RF Fire Department;
- Research providing more arts programming including:
  - Movement and Memory and for Joyful Aging.
    - More memoir writing seminars.
    - A humor-based series on Seniors and Stand-up (comedy).
    - Seniors and theater performance.
    - A closer relationship with the weaving, painting, jewelry and woodworking options at the Senior Lifelong Learning Center (located at OP Arms).
- Research providing more social opportunities like Mahjong groups for local seniors.
- Increase outreach with local Bridge Clubs.
- Expand lectures on the importance of having powers of attorney, particularly those for health care.
- Increase coordination with local cab or other transportation services for better transportation options for local seniors.

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