

River Forest Township
 Senior Outreach Coordinator
 Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019
 (April 2018– March 31, 2019)
 Annual Report

Annual Town Meeting, 4/09/2019

In June 2015, the Township funded a new part-time position (Senior Outreach Coordinator, hereafter referred to as “SOC”), to further assist its local senior citizens. The Township hired Cathaleen Roach as an independent contractor to work approximately 10 – 15 hrs./week. We are nearing completion of four years of funding. The Senior Outreach Coordinator position is now an established position with a number of relationships created throughout River Forest, Oak Park and beyond. In FY 2018-2019, the SOC focused primarily on three areas: programming initiatives for lifelong learning and health & safety; collaboration with other local entities; and senior outreach.

The main goal of this part-time position is to “get the Resident to the resource.” In other words, it is to provide outreach and access to vital human services provided for our aging residents by both River Forest and Oak Park Townships. As such, the SOC is not typically the “service provider,” but instead, performs a vital role informing residents where and how to access Township and other services to which they are entitled (like, e.g., Care Management, Congregate Dining, Transportation, SHIP counselling, Caregiver Support, ICE Packets, educational lectures, etc.)

In addition to its perceived primary function as the connector or conduit to resources, the second role is to co-fund important RF Library programming for seniors to decrease isolation and increase the quality of life. Several years ago, together, the RF Township and RF Library determined that joint funding for senior programming would increase the number and quality of programming that we could provide and target for our seniors.

The SOC reports directly to Supervisor Carla Sloan. In addition to being part-time Township SOC, Ms. Roach volunteers bi-weekly with the 3 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 on site at OPTSS.

I. PROGRAMMING INITIATIVES: LIFELONG LEARNING AND HEALTH & SAFETY

**A. Programming Co-Sponsored with River Forest Library -- CSAYL™
 (including the new “Gather – Discover – Engage” series)**

River Forest Township continues to enjoy its great working relationship with the River Forest Public Library, particularly through their limited joint partnership created four years ago.

Much of their jointly-funded partnership remains the same as in the previous few years, including the CSAYL weekend and evening programming; the Connect with Tech programming; and Coffee Monday. Now, however, after a modest restructuring, Connect with Tech, Coffee Monday and two NEW programs, (monthly Film Lover Fridays and monthly Social Stitching), are still bundled under CSAYL, but are termed the “Gather-Discover-Engage” series.

Here are the total numbers for the fiscal year:

Programs -- Total number of combined GDE and CSAYL weekend/evening **programs** in FY 2018-2019 is: **T = 58 total programs for joint RF Township and RF Library CSAYL™ programming.**

Attendees -- Total number of combined GDE and CSAYL weekend/evening **attendees** in FY 2018-2019 is: **T= 1,288 total attendees for joint RF Township and RF Library CSAYL™ programming.** [This compares to total of 1075 attendees last fiscal year.]

As they are structured or bundled somewhat differently now, they are discussed separately herein:

1. CSAYL™: Gather – Discover – Engage – (“GDE”)—

As noted above, the RF Library now bundles four jointly-financed programs with RF Township as the “Gather-Discover-Engage” series. The stated purpose of this GDE series programming is “to provide seniors regular social opportunities to help increase their health, vitality, wellness and quality of life at an age when fixed incomes, lack of mobility and social isolation are very real barriers.” They include:

Coffee Mondays – First Monday of every month. Attendees gather for free coffee and pastries and conversation. “Content” is provided every month and is quite varied, but mostly consists of speakers engaged in areas of special interest to seniors (e.g., senior transportation, fitness, poetry, breathing, etc.). Coffee Monday typically draws 12 – 20 attendees each month, which is a noticeable increase since last year and suggests the program is gaining traction as “established.”

Connect with Tech – Second Wednesday of every month. Staffed by RFPL employees, it offers an open drop-in format allowing hands-on assistance with technology questions and concerns with seniors phones, pads, pc’s and other devices.

NEW! Film Lover Fridays – Third Friday of every month. Attendees watch famous “classic movies” based around themes (e.g., Jimmy Stewart movies, courtroom dramas) etc. We provide light refreshments, but attendees may also bring their own lunches.

NEW! Social Stitching – Fourth Wednesday of every month. Attendees enjoy light refreshments and bring their own stitching, like knitting, crochet and embroidery to work on together.

Total number of GDE programs in FY 2018-2019 –

Programs = 36 GDE programs for the fiscal year.

Total number of GDE attendees in FY 2018-2019 --

Attendees = 354 GDE attendees for the fiscal year.

2. CSAYL™: CSAYL Weekend and Evening Lecture Series

In 2016 and 2017 the new Library-Township funding partnership brought a tremendous increase in free programming available to local RF seniors in large part through its popular “Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”™ weekend and evening lecture series. Local seniors have responded enthusiastically.

CSAYL™ -- Total number of CSAYL evening and weekend **programs** in FY 2018-2019 –

Programs = 22 CSYAYL eve/wkend programs for the fiscal year.

Total number of CSAYL evening and weekend **attendees** in FY 2018-2019 –

Attendees = 934 CSAYL eve/wkend attendees for the fiscal year.

Especially popular were the **historical programs** (like the *Six Wives of Henry VIII* and *the Chicago “el”*), **holiday events** (like *Illinois Ghosts and the Afterlife* around Halloween and *The Making of It’s A Wonderful Life* movie, around Christmas) and **the music events** (like the *Dooley Brothers Summer Lawn Concert* and the *Irish Heritage Singers* around St. Patrick’s Day).

B. Other Senior Programming Initiatives Sponsored by River Forest Township

- Pickleball – Our weekly Pickleball programming jointly hosted by The Tennis & Fitness Center in Oak Park and the River Forest Township now continues in its second year on Wednesdays and remains popular. Local residents receive training and free equipment rental for “America’s Fastest Growing Sport!”
- CDEL – Powers of Attorney Preparation for low-income residents – We continue to support CDEL, the Chicago Center for Disability & Elder Law, and its program providing our local low-income senior residents free preparation of health care and property powers of attorney, and living wills at the Seniors Advanced Directives (free) Clinic, staffed twice-monthly by Cathaleen Roach (on volunteer time) for local senior residents who qualify at the OPTSS office.

C. Ninth Annual Celebrating Seniors Week™ Programming & Other Participation May 2 – May 9, 2019

Every year for four years, the SOC has spent a great deal of time preparing for the annual Celebrating Seniors Week™, always held in April or May. This year, the Township plans on hosting, co-hosting or assisting with six local events in one week. During that week, there are a total of approximately 40 free presentations presented in the tri-suburban area (Forest Park, River

Forest & Oak Park) by the Celebrating Seniors Coalition. Additionally, the SOC assists significantly in selecting, interviewing, photographing and preparing “copy” for this annual CSW Resource Guide, featuring 60 local honorees for “60 Over 60.”

A significant part of the SOC’s winter workload is in: 1) creating the programming that RF Township will host in May; and 2) selecting, interviewing, photographing and writing biographies for the “60 Over 60” honorees.

This year, RF Township will host 5 events at the River Forest Community Center as part of CSW, and will provide “a site” for a 6th event, hosted by OPTSS. The May 2019 is now complete and is as follows:

To be held at the **River Forest Community Center**, 8020 Madison Street, River Forest in May 2019:

- **Thursday, 5/2, 10:30 am– *Perspiration & Inspiration: Why Staying Active Is for Everyone*** with West Cook YMCA Healthy Aging Program and Gottlieb Personal Trainer for seniors.
- **Friday, 5/3, 2:00 pm – *Re-Imagining Aging, One Breath at a Time*** with ML Wahlfeldt and Susan Lucci.
- **Monday, 5/6, 2:00 pm – *Between Generations: Interviewing for Genealogy Research and How It Promotes Family Connectedness*** with RF residents Abby Schmelling and Bob Ray.
- **Tuesday, 5/7, 1:00 pm – *Step-by-Step: Decluttering & Downsizing and What to Do with All That Stuff***. A Panel discussion with Laura Bruzas and Kristi Bangert, with handouts and instruction.
- **Wednesday, 5/8, 10 a.m – 2 pm –** OPTSS sponsors *IL Sec’y of State “Super Seniors” Day* for state IDs; license renewal; some testing; **Preregistration suggested**. Call OPTSS Charles Barnes at 708-383-4806.
- **Thursday, 5/9, 10:30 am – *Elder Life Planning Using Legal Tools like Advanced Directives, Wills and TODI’s*** with Center for Disability & Elder Law (CDEL) Legal Director Tom Wendt.

II COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT & OTHER ENTITIES

The second prong of SOC efforts is collaboration with local entities in new or on-going initiatives. The SOC spent much of FY 2018-2019 creating or assisting with NEW initiatives with the following local government and other entities. Of particular new interest this year: 1) our efforts with the Dementia Friendly Illinois initiative for River Forest; 2) our outreach to the OPRF Food Pantry, and the exceedingly valuable service they provide in getting low income seniors medical insurance and other benefits applications submitted; and 3) our support of community mental health wellness screening (by Concordia and OPTSS) which yielded a big return in re: candidates for depression and other counselling services.

A. NEW Initiatives with current partners in FY 2018-2019:

- **DEMENTIA FRIENDLY RIVER FOREST** – RF Township is an active partner in local collaborative efforts which resulted in River Forest being named an official “Dementia Friendly” community, as part of the Dementia Friendly Illinois program. RF Township participated in the preparation of a new document, the “What To Do after a Dementia

Diagnosis” flowchart, which illustrates the myriad services available to local families suffering the dementia diagnosis of a loved one. This document will be professionally printed and provided free throughout the River Forest and Oak Park senior communities.

- WELLNESS FAIR -- RF Township supported the free Community Mental Health and Wellness Fair scheduled at OP Seniors Services on Friday, May 18, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Free mental wellness screenings were conducted in privacy, and a variety of services were featured for all attendees. Also sponsored by OPCMHB and CU-Chicago.
- THE CHANGING AGING TOUR -- The Township Supervisor and SOC attended “The Changing Aging Tour,” hosted by Marc Blessoff and *The Wednesday Journal* on Wednesday, Oct.10, 2018. Specifically, we attended the “Disrupting Dementia” event and the Township Supervisor coordinated the OPRF Township Seniors information “booth” or table. It is estimated that approximately 100/120 people attended the afternoon event.
- FIRE DEPT OPEN HOUSE - The Township Supervisor, the SOC, and Senior Committee member Margie Rudnick volunteered a day at the RF Fire Dept. Open House held Saturday, October 13, 2018. The Township had a table featuring ICE Packets and other items of interest for the approximately 300 attendees anticipated by RFFD for their Open House.
- OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY --The SOC and Mental Health Coordinator met Nov. 7, 2018 with Amanda Kuhn, Social Services Director at **Oak Park and River Forest Food Pantry** on site at the food pantry. Amanda provided us in great detail all the free services provided by the Pantry’s Food Assistance program. We learned about programs potentially applicable to our elderly and mentally ill callers, like Medicaid Health Insurance (including expedited sign up) and the Medicare Savings Program. Recently, we have referred several of our constituent callers to OPFP. One of our senior clients received expedited Medicaid benefits enrollment at the Pantry. We believe this is going to be an increasingly valuable resource for us in re: improving benefits access for our seniors/low-income residents.
- MEANINGFUL LIVING WELLNESS GROUPS –RF Township publicizes and supports Concordia University’s ongoing counselling efforts providing free 8-week Wellness Groups for Older Adults (ages 60+) at Concordia University campus.
- MEMORY CAFÉ new at OPTSS -- RF Township SOC and Supervisor attended the inaugural Memory Café in February 2019, (and now held monthly at OPTSS), and assists with actively publicizing the new programming. OPTSS is among the Midwest’s first hosts in the nationwide Memory Café movement, and this is an exciting new development for our area. Memory Cafés offer a Coffee House atmosphere, and engaging programs for individuals living with memory changes and their care partners.
- THRIVE TALKS, including Dementia – RF Township publicized and attended Talk #3 in March 2019 sponsored by the local Thrive Counseling Center, “*Caring for Family Members Living with Dementia: Navigating the Ambiguity.*” RF Township publicizes a link to this talk which is now placed on the Thrive website for community access.
- SHIP and Medical Lending Library Outreach – An increase in local constituent interest in two popular programs, SHIP (Senior Health Insurance Program, a State of IL

sponsored consumer education service) and our local Medical Lending Library (at OPTSS, which lends residents certain available medical equipment for free), prompted outreach efforts by RF Township to increase awareness and availability of these popular programs. Also, the Township now provides a free site in RF at Township offices one Friday a month for SHIP counselling to offer better local access for our RF residents. RF Township is working with OPTSS to explore whether and how to provide additional increased access to trained SHIP volunteers for local residents, as these free appointments fill up quickly during Medicare Open Enrollment months.

- COMMUNITY CALENDAR - RF Senior Outreach is publicizing the availability of the new Community Calendar (a local 6-taxing body effort) now located at www.rfhappenings.com
- ARBOR WEST NEIGHBORS – We support AWN efforts to promote their two new walking groups for seniors (two levels of fitness) interested in exercise and camaraderie.

B. CONTINUING Initiatives with current partners in FY 2018 -2019:

- AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE – RF Township publicizes the now established twice-monthly free consulting opportunities at a local River Forest location (River Forest Medical Campus, affiliated with West Suburban Medical Center) for any local senior. Staff from OPTSS are available for one-on-one consultations to provide assistance with local state and federal programs for seniors regarding topics like meal programs; home energy assistance; transportation services and other services.
- JOBS FOR SENIORS – The SOC continues her partnership with Laina Krisik, Employment & Employer Services/Associate Career Coach, from the American Jobs Center- Maywood Center campus at 1700 South First St., in Maywood. Ms. Krisik’s federally funded program helps those seniors looking for both full and part-time work, with an overlap in the Center with AARP assistance. There are a plethora of services available to seniors and other services at the Maywood Job Center. Some of these services are income-dependent, and others, from AARP in particular, do not have any maximum income limitation necessary to access the services/job training.
- LOSS – River Forest Township enters its second year as a host site for LOSS, Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide. The Township is the host site for a monthly Group Support meeting, with licensed clinicians provided by Catholic Charities in its highly regarded LOSS program. This program is a “no denominational” program, without any religious input or affiliation. The program has seen a marked increase in attendance over the last year, and may now be reaching “established” status.
- THE GREAT NEIGHBORS PROGRAM – SOC Cathaleen Roach does not have any involvement in this program, but Supervisor Carla Sloan provides support to the collaboration of Arbor West Neighbors, OPTSS and Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly’s “Great Neighbors Program,” connecting local volunteers with local senior residents in need of companionship and other assistance. All members apply through and will be screened by the Great Neighbors Program, which is overseen by the Great Neighbors Administrator at Little Brothers. Its stated purpose is “to reach older adults in

and beyond Chicago to help build community for all ages with a focus on preventing older adults from being isolated and alone.”

- SAFE DISPOSAL OF RX – RF Township publicizes the partnership with RF Police and Oak Park Police Departments for the “safe disposal of prescription and over-the-counter medications,” with two drop off locations at RF Village Hall and the Lobby of the Oak Park Police Department.
- RIVER FOREST ROTARY RALLY -- River Forest Township continued its annual participation on Saturday August 25, 2018 with its tent at the annual Rotary Rally in Keystone Park, greeting hundreds of attendees and providing written pamphlets, fliers, brochures and other information re: Township services.
- FOREST PARK MOHR COMMUNITY CENTER - We support Forest Park’s Mohr Center efforts providing area seniors with wonderful cultural day trips, including transportation and a meal at or below cost.
- LOCAL CHURCHES - We engage with local churches and other religious institutions including River Forest Grace Lutheran Church; St. Luke’s; and West Suburban Temple Har Zion and Oak Park Temple’s STAR group.
- ENCORE – We actively promote the second year of the national Encore senior choir ensemble based in River Forest with local residents.
- OP COMMUNITY FOUNDATION - The SOC participated in the annual OP Community Foundation Volunteer Meet & Greet in April 2018, held in the new location, West Cook YMCA.

III. OUTREACH

The third prong of the Township’s commitment to its seniors involves its outreach efforts.

- ICE Packets (“In Case Of Emergency” packets) – Currently, SOC is working on updating and reordering for this next group of the very popular ICE Packets.
- Regular Meeting & Other Outreach Commitments – The SOC attended meetings and provided status reports for the following:
 - Monthly - RF Township Board meetings
 - Other -- SOC is responsible for all upkeep and monthly updating the following Bulletin Boards and “circular display racks,” or “trees” at RFCC and RF Village Hall: The RFCC Senior Board on 1st Floor; the RFCC Senior Bulletin Board on 2nd floor; the RF Library Senior Board; and two dedicated display racks, or “trees” at RF Village Hall and 1st floor RFCC. All of these boards and racks provide lots of handouts and timely information for events of interest to our local seniors.
- 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, and other social inquiries. We see our key role as “getting the resident to the resource,” i.e., getting the

caller to the proper agency or resource answering their questions. 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; Arbor West Neighbors; and tax preparation efforts for volunteers and clients.
- 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:
 - Works with Jeff Belmonte providing Senior Services news for website at rftownship.org.
 - Works with Catherine Rison (OPTSS) providing copy for RF Township in quarterly News & Views (sent to approximately 4000 targeted River Forest and Oak Park seniors).
 - Sends out a monthly email to local seniors advising of upcoming programming, particularly Coffee Mondays and CSAYL™ (“Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”) events.
 - Works with Meghan O’Keefe and Francesca Arnold at River Forest Library creating or distributing promotional posters and outreach materials for all co-sponsored events.
 - Prepares numerous “senior packets,” prepared primarily for the Township Assessor visits with local seniors, which identify senior services available to local seniors through the Township.

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 2019-2020 by investigating the following areas for possible broader outreach next year:

- Expand relationships with 3 local college/universities (Triton, Concordia, Dominican/Sienna) and continue to promote reduced or free senior tuition and other lifelong learning opportunities sponsored by college/universities for local residents.
- Pursue a new more formal relationship with the Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest. In particular, have the archivist come to speak, explaining how to pull village building, sale and other permit records to research the history of one’s home in River Forest.
- Expand more programming to capture current interest in genealogy efforts.

- Pursue a more regular and systematic outreach with local area hospitals to better publicize cancer support groups; and free health screenings like skin cancer and balance assessments.
- Pursue greater depth in programming related to: 1) the science, or “the why’s,” behind getting seniors of all abilities to increase physical activity; and 2) the “where” of such activities (e.g., RF Park District; West Cook YMCA Healthy Aging Program).
- Expand our relationship with the RF Police Department and Community Bank for more seminars teaching senior residents about active local scams and other safety issues that are important to seniors.
- Expand relationship with RF Fire Department, via ICE Packet and Falls Prevention efforts.
- Continue to research and expand efforts to provide more programming including:
 - Movement –
 - Where possible, connect residents with dance, YMCA exercise, RF Medical Center chair yoga, and other avenues for physical movement;

The Arts – Explore:

- 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.
- Expand lectures on the importance of having powers of attorney, particularly those for health care.
- Increase outreach with Alzheimer’s Assn. and Gottlieb Hospital efforts in Brain Health Initiatives.

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