

Annual Report FY2020

Annual Town Meeting, Spring 2020

Prepared and submitted by Cathaleen Roach, Senior Outreach Coordinator, April 2020.

SUMMARY

For almost five years, since June 2015, River Forest Township has funded a 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. The Senior Outreach Coordinator position is now an established position with a number of relationships created throughout River Forest, Oak Park and beyond.

A central goal of this part-time position is to “get the Resident to the resources” by providing access to and awareness of vital human services provided by both River Forest and Oak Park Townships to our local RF seniors. These include increasing awareness of local programs available to seniors like: Care Management, Congregate Dining, Transportation, SHIP (State Health Insurance Program) counseling, Caregiver Support, educational programming and more. The RF Township provides a vital role in getting elders to local resources, (as distinguished from being an actual service provider due to the small size of the Village and our access to broader funded programs for seniors). *Please refer to the FY2020 Annual Report from Township Senior Services Director Pamela Mahn for details on these programs and number of River Forest residents served.*

Other identified purposes for the SOC position include the traditional three main areas, described in earlier Annual Reports: 1. Programming; 2. Collaboration with other local entities; and 3. Senior Outreach (via written communication, publicity and other means).

Last, there are some important new additions to SOC duties this FY2020, which are discussed in further detail below, including:

1. Membership in RF Complete Census Count Committee
2. Coronavirus COVID-19 Response — Supervisor Carla Sloan led
3. Elder Scams Prevention — Including November panel and Census 2020 efforts
4. Collaboration with AWN, CU — New Monthly Memoir Writing Group
5. RF Dementia Friendly Accomplishments

I. Continued Progress with Programming; Collaboration with Government and other Groups; and Outreach

In addition to the new initiatives in FY 2020 described below, the SOC also focused on three traditional areas from previous years: programming initiatives for lifelong learning and health & safety; collaboration with other local entities; and senior outreach.

A. Objective No. 1 --Programming

Programming is divided into the two biggest pieces:

1. Programming co-funded with River Forest Public Library, and
2. “Other” - Independent RF Township senior programming, including the annual Celebrating Seniors Week, May 2020.

1. River Forest Library Programming Co-Sponsored with Township—

RF Township enjoys and celebrates a special working relationship with River Forest Public Library. Together, they co-sponsor programs and evenly split costs for educational and other enjoyable programming directed at seniors.

These programs are designed to help alleviate isolation in seniors, and to foster friendship and educational enrichment for the seniors.

SUMMARY TOTALS FOR ALL JOINT PROGRAMMING WITH RF LIBRARY:

a. Total No. of Jointly Funded **Programs** FY 2020 = 70 programs

Gather-Discover-Engage = 39 programs

CSAYL (Cel. Sr. All Yr. Long) = 31 programs

T= 70 Programs in FY 2020 (G-D-E + CSAYL)

b. Total **Attendees** FY 2020 T= 1,379 total attendees:

Gather-Discover-Engage = 387 Attendees

CSAYL = 992 Attendees

T= 1,379 Attendees for Joint Programming with RFPL in FY 2020

Further Breakdown for Joint Programming with RF Library:

Taking the aforementioned total numbers and breaking them down further yields the following information:

a. CSAYL — Celebrating Seniors All Year Long Programming -

In previous years, 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.

This year, in FY 2020, a total of 992 people attended 31 programs co-sponsored by River Forest Township and River Forest Library. Especially popular were Music programs (World/Arab Music; Holiday music; Children’s Chamber music). The most popular non-music event was Charlie Thomas’ Genealogy and Historical research event.

b. Gather-Discover-Engage –

Additionally, for the past two years, the RF Library now bundles several jointly-financed programs with RF Township under the title, “Gather-Discover-Engage.”

This year, in FY 2020, a total of 387 people attended 39 programs co-sponsored by River Forest Township and River Forest Library as part of GDE.

These include:

Coffee Mondays –

These are held the first Monday of every month. Attendees gather for

free coffee, food and conversation. We switched to serving bagels this year, and now serve coffee in environmentally friendly coffee mugs, (after a fun CM program provided by RF Sustainability Commission). “Content” is provided every month and is quite varied, but mostly consists of speakers engaged in areas of special interest to seniors. Of great interest this year was an appearance by the Frank Lloyd Wright Unity Temple group, who achieved UNESCO World Heritage Status earlier in 2019 and described those efforts in our February event.

Film Lover Fridays –

These are held the third Friday of every month. Attendees watch famous “old movies” based around themes (e.g., Jimmy Stewart movies, Courtroom dramas) etc. We provide light refreshments, but attendees may also bring their own lunches. Despite a long break while the library Community Room was under construction and therefore not able to host Friday movies, attendance resumed with normal numbers after construction was completed.

Social Stitching –

These are held the fourth Wednesday of every month.

[Note: The fourth program, “Connect With Tech,” is no longer financed due to declining attendance, but the tech service still remains viable to all seniors who bring in their devices or seek instruction from trained RF librarians].

2. Other Programming Provided by RF Township, Including Celebrating Seniors Week

Celebrating Seniors Week — 10th Annual, scheduled for May 14 - 21, 2020.

A significant part of the SOC’s winter workload begins in January and involves extensive participation in local Celebrating Seniors Week efforts. Every year representatives from 3 local suburbs (Oak Park, Forest Park and River Forest) plan a week-long set of festivities and prepare a Resource Guide distributed widely locally, to honor local seniors. This year was to be the 10th annual Celebrating Seniors Week.

For the SOC, this workload is divided into two big tasks: 1. Creating and producing programming that RF Township hosts locally during CSW; and 2. Selecting, inviting, interviewing, photographing and writing biographies for the “60 Over 60” honorees who are also featured in the annual Resource Guide.

In March, 2020, all CSW activities were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place order.

Prior to cancellation, the planned SOC programming for this year’s 2020 events for RF included: the always well-attended Secretary of State’s Super Senior Day; the equally highly popular local genealogist Charlie Thomas; and ML Wahlfeldt and Susan Lucci with programming on Breathing and Wellness for Seniors. Additionally, SOC interviewed, photographed and wrote up biographies for 40 local seniors, with a special emphasis on diversity and richness in life experience in selecting honorees.

Although all CSW efforts were postponed indefinitely due to COVID-19 pandemic, the SOC efforts did not go for naught. The 10th Annual CSW will be reinstated, hopefully in the Fall, 2020 at which point most or all of these previous efforts can be put in place again easily.

Pickleball – The RF Township continues to support weekly Pickleball programming hosted by The Tennis & Fitness Center in Oak Park. Local RF residents receive training and free equipment rental for “America’s Fastest Growing Sport!”

New Programming in Elder Scams Protection and Monthly Memoir Writing Workshops -- The SOC engaged in new programming efforts in Elder Scams prevention and awareness, and a Monthly Memoir Writing Workshop in FY 2020 as well, described below in Section II, “ New Initiatives.”

B. Objective No. 2 - Ongoing Initiatives with Local Government & Other Entities -

Additionally, the SOC and other Township members spent much of FY 2020 assisting with ongoing initiatives with the following local government and other entities, either with direct participation or by publicizing events and other relevant outreach:

- RF Township Trustee Karen Taubman attended monthly evening Senior Committee meetings at OPTSS.
- Memory Cafe at OPTSS -- RF Township supports the Memory Cafés held monthly at OPTSS, and assists with actively publicizing the event. Among the Midwest’s first hosts in the Memory Café movement, 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.
- 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, lending residents certain available medical equipment for free), prompted outreach efforts by RF Township to increase awareness and availability of these popular programs. The Township now provides a free site in RF at Township offices one Friday a month for SHIP counseling.
- 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
- RF Fire Department October Open House- For the 2nd year in a row, the SOC volunteered a day at the RF Fire Dept. Open House held in October 2019. The Township had a table featuring ICE Packets and other items of interest for the attendees.
- 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. We also collaborate with them on a new Monthly Memoir writing effort. (See below, Section II).
- Aging & Disability Resource Consulting – 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.

- LOSS – River Forest Township enters its 3rd 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.
- Reach-Out/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.”

Note: This is separate and distinct from the newly created RF Senior Citizens Response Program described in Supervisor Sloan’s Annual Report, and created in response to the COVID19 crisis March, 2020.

- 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 in August, 2019 with its tent and the OPTSS Transportation Bus, at the annual Rotary Rally in Keystone Park greeting hundreds of attendees and providing written pamphlets, fliers, brochures and other information re: Township services, including Senior 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 by actively publicizing them to our seniors.
- 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.
- Sounds Good! Chorale – [formerly named the Encore Choir]. We actively promote this local senior choir ensemble based in River Forest with local residents.
- Thrive Talks – RF Township publicizes relevant mental health talks sponsored by the local Thrive Counseling Center. A link to their talks is now placed on the Township website for community use.
- Grief Support Groups — In addition to LOSS which deals with suicide, (see above) we support general bereavement support groups for seniors (e.g., widows and widowers and others) by actively publicizing the LOYOLA Ministry-sponsored drop-in groups and the more specialized 6 weeks groups.

- Caregiver Support Groups – We continue to support and publicize local efforts at Caregiving Support, including programming with OPTSS and Concordia University, Center for Gerontology. Additionally, the SOC coordinated a Coffee Monday program on Caregiver Support scheduled for May, 2020, which was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 restrictions.
- We have created a rich and supportive relationship with The Wellness House, a cancer support resource in Hinsdale. The Wellness House has spent two years creating programs (single day programs and a free cancer support weekly drop in group held at Rush Oak Park hospital for any local residents), the availability of which, we promote to our residents.

C. Objective No. 3 - Outreach

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

Regular Meeting & Other Commitments – The SOC attended meetings and provided status reports for the following:

- Monthly - RF Township Board meetings; RF Dementia Friendly meetings; and RF Complete Census Count meetings.
- Other -- The SOC is responsible for all upkeep and monthly updating for 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.

Communications -

- The SOC 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.
- The SOC 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).
- The SOC sends out a Monthly email to local seniors advising of upcoming programming, particularly Coffee Mondays and CSAYL (“Celebrating Seniors All Year Long”) events.
- 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 SOC works with Jeff Belmonte providing Senior Services news for website at rftownship.org.
- The SOC 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.

Other -

- Constituent calls: The 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; Sounds Good! Choir for senior choir groups and their performances; The Willard PTO for an annual A Senior Tea with the school children; Arbor West Neighbors; and tax preparation efforts for volunteers and clients.

II. New Initiatives for FY2020 with Township SOC and Others –

A. Membership in RF Complete Census Count Efforts —

The Township, along with the Village and many other local groups, recognizes the keen importance of getting all local seniors properly reported as part of the US 2020 Census Count efforts.

Consequently, the SOC spent time in FY2020 attending meetings at RF Village Hall; identifying areas of local need for efforts with seniors; and creating/supporting consortium initiatives to:

1. Identify local seniors for Census reporting purposes;
2. Publicize efforts to increase awareness of and participation by local seniors in reporting to Census 2020;
3. Foster and promote village-wide efforts at distributing promotional “product” (like Census bags, yard signs, palm cards, pins, pens, promotional fliers) throughout village and specifically, where seniors congregate.
4. Include in all monthly and other promotional communication efforts by SOC to seniors, the importance of Census Response reporting and the ease with which it may be accomplished.

As of this writing (late-April 2020) RF Village reports a village-wide total Census response rate of 75.4%. The RFCCC’s long-stated goal is to surpass the Village 2010 Census response rate of 80%, by close of Census 2020 Reporting dates (now extended to October, 2020).

B. Coronavirus COVID-19 Response by RF Township –

In March, 2020, Supervisor Carla Sloan was able to assist in getting emergency support to local seniors within days of Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker’s directive for the shelter-in-home orders. *Please see her Annual Report for a detailed account of RF Township efforts and participation in pandemic relief efforts Village-wide, including creation of the RF Senior Citizen Response Program.*

Also, for the duration of the pandemic shelter-in-place efforts, SOC and husband, John Filosa, volunteer their time twice weekly to deliver meals to local homebound seniors thru the OPTSS Home Meal Distribution program, which has seen a sharp increase in need since the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, as of early April 2020, the Meals Program had seen and served an increase of 68% in demand in only 3 weeks.

C. New Efforts at Elder Scams Awareness and Prevention —

This year, the SOC increased efforts at Elder Scams awareness and prevention. In November, she organized and moderated a local panel for seniors held at the RF Village Hall Community Room with RF Police Officer Benjamin Ransom and Securities and Exchange legal counsel, Division of Enforcement's, Emlee Hilliard-Smith for an informative and interactive evening. This evening focused on two areas — financial fraud; and safeguarding seniors at home from being targeted in home repair and other scams.

Also, in FY2020, the SOC directed focused efforts to seniors in her monthly communications and other efforts re: avoiding scams associated with Census 2020 reporting requirements. She distributed safety fliers which were specially prepared by the federal government and directed at seniors.

D. New Collaboration with Arbor West Neighbors and Concordia University Center for Gerontology with the Monthly Memoir Writing Series

In January, 2020 the SOC helped to roll out and teach in a 6-month program co-sponsored with Arbor West Neighbors and Concordia University's Center for Gerontology. Capitalizing on the popularity of Memoir Writing single day programming provided by the Township in previous years, this new initiative provides a free once-a-month 2.5 hour instruction and writing collaboration experience for local seniors, and is held at the comfortable Board of Trustees Room at CU.

This Memoir Writing Group is designed to do two things: 1. Create a deeper, more meaningful experience for senior writers wanting more than the heretofore single day seminar experience; and 2. Capitalize on the enormous popularity of recent new RF programming introducing historical research/genealogy into traditional memoir writing efforts.

We completed 2 of the scheduled 6 monthly sessions very successfully. There is a temporary cessation due to CU canceling all programming at the University due to the pandemic and COVID-19 directives to shelter in place. Right now on-line programming is being discussed, and the program will resume with in-person activity when restrictions are lifted.

E. New and Continued Efforts with Village Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Beginning FY2020 saw sustained and increased efforts by the local Dementia Friendly consortium — including RF Township — that had been newly formed towards the end of previous fiscal year. This year, River Forest was awarded “Dementia Friendly” status by DF Illinois. Supervisor Carla Sloan was personally trained in Dementia Awareness and certified as such. Tremendous local effort was put in to invite local businesses to receive this same type of training in Dementia Awareness and thereby receive DF Business certification. SOC and Pam Mahn worked together and created a graphics flow-chart to be distributed to any local family facing a recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's or Dementia. Specifically, this chart organizes the

myriad of federal, state and local services available to local families now navigating the new terrain following a Dementia diagnosis.

III. Future Plans

The SOC and Township leadership make a point of listening to our 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 next fiscal year, FY 2021, by investigating the following areas for possible broader outreach next year:

- Explore what, if any, parts of the newly established River Forest Senior Citizen Response Program might be maintained on a permanent basis after the COVID-19 pandemic issues subside, to provide sustained support for our local elderly.
- More safeguarding against scams and frauds, especially re: COVID-19 and other issues.
- More programming with:
 - Frank Lloyd Wright and Unity Temple and UNESCO accomplishments.
 - The Oak Park Historical Society and its new move to its permanent home on Lake St. in Oak Park.
- Promote a wider range of existing local support groups:
 - Cancer Support Groups -- Help promote further, Hinsdale's Wellness House local initiatives AND its weekly cancer support group held weekly at Rush Oak Park Hospital. (There is no need to be treated at Rush for entry to this local cancer support group).
 - Grief Support Groups -- For widows and widowers through Loyola Ministry Bereavement Groups.
 - Suicide Support Groups – Continue our dedicated efforts with the LOSS program for local persons affected by the loss of a loved one due to suicide.
 - Caregiver Support Groups – Continue our work and programming with Caregiver Support providers like OPTSS and Concordia University, Center for Gerontology.
- Expand relationship with RF Fire Department, via ICE Packet and Falls Prevention efforts;
- Where possible, connect residents with dance, YMCA exercise, RF Medical Center chair yoga, and other avenues for physical movement;
- Promote brand new OP Park District fitness and other programming for seniors 50+ years and older in OP and RF.
- The Arts – Explore:
 - More memoir writing seminars; Expand Genealogy and historical research events;
 - 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 now at Dole Center).
- 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 by connecting with CDEL and other local legal initiatives for elderly.
- Increase coordination with local cab or other transportation services for better transportation options for local seniors.

- Increase outreach with Alzheimer's Assn. and Gottlieb Hospital efforts in Brain Health Initiatives.
- Expand SHIP counseling — RF Township is working with OPTSS to explore whether and how to provide additional increased access to trained SHIP volunteers for local residents.

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