

Millennium Project Public Comments, October 6, 1999

- 1) ***Did the Transportation Task Force find that seniors who were still working needed transportation to get to work? Was this addressed?***

No, seniors did not stand out as a group who needed transportation to work.

- 2) ***What is the function of the Shared Service Coordinator in senior housing? Are you suggesting that this person be trained and available to senior apartments?***

The shared service coordinator is a person who provides on-site case management and assistance to seniors in apartment complexes. More senior apartments are moving toward providing these services. Smaller apartments can combine in order to obtain funding for a shared service coordinator through the government.

- 3) ***Is there any effort being made to develop a county-wide task force on transportation for low-income seniors living in rural areas?***

Dwight Mengel of Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) answered that the focus is turning toward the expansion of Gadabout-like demand-response services for the County. A funding source is needed. It is in the planning for the next 5-10 years.

Dan Winch of the Tompkins County Board of Representatives agreed that though he is pleased with the expansion of TCAT, more needs to be done for rural transportation within the County.

Mary Pat Dolan, Commissioner of Tompkins County Department of Social Services, commented that DSS is exploring the possibility of providing financing options for low-income people of all ages to purchase cars.

- 4) ***Are there options for seniors to get money through their housing equity through reverse mortgages?***

Yes, the Office for the Aging is HUD-certified to provide reverse mortgage counseling.

- 5) ***What can be done if a senior is living between two areas (ie the city of Ithaca and the town of Ithaca) and is not covered for Home Repair Programs through INHS or BHTC?***

This has been identified as an unmet need through the Office for the Aging. It is recommended that people speak to their local representatives about this issue.

- 6) ***Will Gadabout make their busses available to churches to transport people to Sunday morning services at no cost?***

The churches must pay for mileage on the busses (\$.80/mile) plus a \$5.00 setup fee. The volunteer driver must be trained and have a commercial license. Gadabout is willing to provide training for volunteer drivers. Currently, few churches participate, and more public information is needed about this service.

- 7) ***Is there a single source in town where seniors can call to ask for information, much like a computer help desk? There appears to be a multitude of agencies to turn to, and it is confusing.***

The Office for the Aging is mandated by law to provide information and referral to seniors in Tompkins County. If COFA does not provide the service directly, we will refer you to the appropriate agency.

Additionally, the Human Services Coalition operates a comprehensive Information and Referral Service covering human service options available in Tompkins County.

- 8) ***Are there any state or local tax breaks available for seniors? What education is happening about them?***

The Real Property Tax Exemption and the STAR Program are heavily advertised for seniors.

- 9) ***Will there be more education and advertisement done about volunteer opportunities for seniors?***

Yes, RSVP recruits constantly, and will be doing even more in the future.

Marge Dill, Director of the Tompkins County Human Services Coalition, commented that out those who volunteer on the Human Service Coalition's phone lines, 50% are seniors, and they do an excellent job.

- 10) A member of the audience was surprised to learn that 45% of Medicare dollars goes to 5% of the recipients.**
- 11) **A member of the audience commented that he wanted more information** *on* coverage of Long Term Care expenses. He commented that Long Term Care insurance is expensive, and he is unable to pay for it with his retirement and pension income. He said that he had been in touch with the HIICAP program but has not found a solution.
- 12) How big an issue is discrimination toward the elderly in Tompkins County?**

There is definitely age discrimination in the employment arena insofar as employers are reluctant to hire seniors. This is largely a hidden phenomenon. We expect more education about this issue to happen through the Workforce Development Board.

- 13) What will be done with the recommendations of this report? What is next?**

The Office for the Aging will take the responsibility for following up on these recommendations, which will include both taking direct action on some items and also working with appropriate agencies to take lead responsibility in the County.