**Tompkins County**

**Office for the Aging**

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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

**FROM: TOMPKINS COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

**CONTACT: LISA HOLMES, DIRECTOR, 274-5482**

**RE: ACCEPTANCE INTO “AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES” NETWORK**

**DATE: MAY 14, 2015**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca have been accepted into AARP’s network of Age- Friendly Communities. An international effort of the World Health Organization, the Age- Friendly Community network includes localities where leadership and residents have committed to making their community a great place to live for people of all ages. The announcement was made at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging’s 40th Annual Luncheon May 14.

"It's no wonder that Ithaca and Tompkins County is consistently voted one of the smartest and best places to live—with its gorges and institutes of higher education. Now, the City and County are committing to making their community friendlier to an aging population, the largest growing demographic in that area," said William Armbruster, Associate State Director for AARP in western New York. "Today, AARP applauds the addition of one of New York State's most beautiful and progressive areas to AARP's Network of Age-Friendly communities."

“Tompkins County is home to over 16,000 people age 60 and over, and that number will increase dramatically over the coming two decades,” said Office for the Aging Director Lisa Holmes. “The Age-Friendly Community initiative will help to further many efforts which are already underway to plan and prepare for our aging population in Tompkins County, and to engage local residents in the process. And we know that changes that are good for older adults—like walkable streets—benefit people of all ages.”

The Tompkins County Office for the Aging will lead the local Age-Friendly Community efforts, together with many community partners, including the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute, municipal leaders, and human service organizations. “This will provide the opportunity to leverage the unique strengths of students, faculty and staff from Ithaca College and Cornell to make our community a place where people can age with dignity and support,” said Ithaca College Gerontology Institute Director Dr. Rhoda Meador, co-founder of this initiative.

In March, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted a resolution supporting the County’s participation in the global Age-Friendly network. Mike Lane, Chair of the Legislature, expressed his support of the initiative: “The 65+ population is Tompkins County’s fastest growing demographic. By becoming part of the Age-Friendly Community network, Tompkins County is demonstrating its commitment to promoting policies to make our community friendly to an aging population.”

The City of Ithaca is another municipality participating in the Age-Friendly network. "Ithaca has been named one of the top cities to live and we are proud of that," said Svante Myrick, Mayor of the City of Ithaca. "More importantly, we are proud to be a diverse community that addresses the needs of our population. Through the Age-Friendly initiative we look forward to continually improve our City so all citizens can age with dignity."

The involvement of older adults in every step of the planning process is key to its success. Community members interested in becoming involved in the Age-Friendly Communities Program should contact the Office for the Aging for more information at 274-5482.

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*Also at the Office for the Aging’s 40th Annual Luncheon:*

**Ted Sobel** was recognized as “Senior Citizen of the Year” for his many years of work with the Brooktondale Community Center, the Sciencenter, and most recently with the Caroline Food Pantry.

**Barbara Barry** was given the “Outstanding Contribution by a Senior“ award for her years of work with Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources (OAR), the Alternatives to Violence Program and her long history of volunteering in the Lansing Community.

The keynote speaker was **Nathan Spreng, PhD**, Director of The Laboratory of Brain and Cognition in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University, who spoke on “Aging and Brain Health: Strategies and Challenges”.

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