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**Senior Neighborhood Project**

The Power of Partnership Initiative (POPI) has been a collaborative effort to create and manage community-driven plans, programs, and outcomes to improve the lives of our children, seniors, and families on the south Santa Barbara County. POPI has become the largest community engagement activity in the history of the Tri-Counties. POPI was launched in 2006 to create something new, and to focus on the key question “How do we as a community make substantive, long-term improvements in the condition of our children, seniors, and their families?” After more than two years of community engagement and involvement of over 5,300 community participants, 200 community organizations and 150 community leaders and experts, the Seniors and Families and Children and Families focus areas have each reached a final conclusion. The south Santa Barbara County community has come to agreement on short list of critical goals and outcomes (please see attachment).

These outcomes were determined to be the most important underlying focus areas needing the attention of the south Santa Barbara County community for the next 5-10 years. In addition, the POPI process helped surface a key strategy of program implementation, known as the neighborhood-based approach. This was determined to be the best method of service delivery that would increase the well-being of seniors and families. As a result, United Way of Santa Barbara County (UWSBC) in partnership with several local senior service delivery organizations have combined efforts to create a Senior Neighborhood Project (SNP).

Many programs currently exist for seniors and their families in Santa Barbara, yet many of these programs do not reach all of the seniors and families who are most in need due to issues of transportation, isolation and/or unawareness of available services. The city of Santa Barbara has the largest percentage (24%) of seniors in the county. Forecasts show that the numbers of seniors in Santa Barbara County will more than double during the next 20 years due to the Baby Boomer generation. The Adult and Aging Network states that “as people age, the need for health and community-based services increases. Older adults with a fixed income are facing a greater financial burden due to recent economic changes. Older individuals unable to pay for services or basic life necessities will place a greater demand on families and loved ones as well as publicly funded services.” As a result, the Santa Barbara County community must prepare and strategize to meet the increasing unmet needs of the growing senior population; a long-term comprehensive solution is required. This solution is SNP.

SNP will be a collaboratively managed, cost-effective, consumer-driven continuum of community partnership care. It will maximize the impact of services for disadvantaged seniors and their families, resulting in a more vital, enduring community. Initially, the program would be developed in 1 or 2 Santa Barbara neighborhoods. Locations for this neighborhood-based project will be determined by using a mapping process using demographic, block by block data, targeting concentrations of seniors by age, income, and ethnicity. Selected neighborhoods will be pilot projects and will have a moveable and centralized facility (bus, shipping container, tent) which would become the neighborhood senior resource center. The facility would offer service referrals and direct services for seniors in the specific community. Assigned neighborhood leaders (individuals called

upon to be the neighborhood's "block captain" and advocate) would keep program participation in the neighborhood alive and active. Members of the targeted neighborhood will be directly involved in implementing and driving the success of the neighborhood model project; they will select their own strategies and tactics, be self governing, and will be part of the solution.

Existing senior communities in the city of Santa Barbara do not have the necessary components of a "livable community" which AARP defines as "one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features, services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life." As we speak, seniors living independent lives in the city of Santa Barbara suffer from isolation and a lack of community support; they become the "forgotten" population. More and more seniors are pushed back into the crevices and shadows of the community, becoming more and more disconnected from social interactions. Once they become invisible, seniors become more at-risk for accidents/injuries, depression, and physical limitations. Seniors may go unseen or unheard of for days without anyone being aware of their absence due to their disconnection with their communities.

According to The Adult and Aging Network report, "isolation among older adults aggravates depression and bereavement, increases suicidal ideation, and prevents rescue." In Santa Barbara County, "substance abuse among adults 60 years and older is the fastest growing health problem" (The Adult and Aging Network). Isolation and societal detachment can have significant impacts on the lives of seniors. Implementing a livable community model would give seniors, who live independently, and their loved ones, daily peace of mind while reducing the emotional impact of autonomy loss as seniors continue to live independently in their homes.

Seniors, as well as our community, can benefit from these livable communities. Emotionally, seniors would be able to keep an independent lifestyle and they would be able to give back to their communities through volunteerism, making them feel more youthful and active. Community involvement would give seniors an overall sense of well-being, self-worth, and positive health reinforcement. Communities could indirectly learn from seniors' knowledge and expertise. Helping seniors live independently for as long as possible would give loved ones the options of more affordable senior programs rather than having to encounter the costly burden of nursing homes, institutional care or in-home care programs.

Seniors living independently for as long as possible requires a strategic plan that would allow seniors to keep their independence while maintaining their and their loved ones' peace of mind. Through the POPI process the South Santa Barbara County community has been able to identify, after much research and valuable input from the community's senior service area experts, two best practice models:

- Beacon Hill Village, Boston MA- model formed by naturally occurring neighborhoods that provides a "one-stop shop" for coordinating services and supports for seniors living in a specific community. As a way to help seniors stay independent in their homes, this model focuses in on six focus areas: wellness, transportation, household tasks and services, meals and groceries, cultural, and social events, and friends.
- Tucson, Southern Arizona Compassion Initiative- the Neighbors Care Alliance (NCA) assists neighborhood and faith based communities in creating and/or strengthening existing volunteer caregiver programs such as: transportation, telephone reassurance, help with housework, home repairs, cross generational activities, civic engagement, educational seminars (support information to help with challenges facing our aging society), and links to other community services.

Both models employ the idea of an Asset-Based Community Development model (ABCD- the mobilization of individual and community talents, skills, and assets to create community-driven development rather than development driven by external agencies). In order to strengthen our community, especially as we ride the current economic storm, we must engage all citizens, place

priority on collaboration and partnerships, and make full use of all existing resources and assets that the city of Santa Barbara has to offer.

With the collaborative effort of the proposed SNP project, our community will be able to take existing community resources and strengths and build on these. Public, private, local, and state organizations whose vision and goals parallel the vision and goals of POPI's seniors and families will be encouraged to collaborate and participate in this communitywide approach. UWSBC, having over 10 years of partnership and collaborative experience, will be the coordinator who will keep the project's momentum going while constantly searching for new ways to improve the project.

Implementation of SNP will provide seniors with the appropriate services at a convenient location with little or no cost. The Neighborhood Project plans to offer services and information on where to obtain services that will meet the everyday needs of seniors. With the help of partnering agencies, businesses and organizations, seniors will be offered concierge, health and wellness and social and cultural discount services and referrals. Community volunteers would assist seniors with daily chores or errands (transportation to doctor appointments, grocery shopping, etc.) and seniors would be given referrals to partner providers (electricians, plumbers, therapists, etc.).

Completion of the 18 month Start Up Phase will require approximately \$200,000 to \$400,000. UWSBC is planning to invest \$50,000 for the Start Up Phase. The Start Up Phase budget covers the cost of a full-time Project Leader, a full-time Community Liaison, evaluator, a Strategic Planner, Project Designer, Demographic mapping services, operations, meetings, and mailings. Your consideration and participation in this Santa Barbara community-changing project will greatly influence the decision-making process by other funders.

For too long seniors have been ignored and forgotten. By engaging seniors into our lives and into the community, their overall well being will be improved. Finding the tactics and strategies to give seniors a chance at extending the quality of their life and living conditions is the easiest thing to do; it is having to face the emotional and costly burden of a disabled, chronically ill, abused, and/or depressed senior that is the hardest. "From now on, every planning decision made in our community must take into account the impact on older residents, who can no longer be an afterthought" (Adriana M. Mendoza, Associate State Director, AARP California). With the help of our community we can do something about it!

If you have any questions about the Senior Neighborhood Project or the proposal, please do not hesitate to call Jeanette Delgado or Paul Didier at 805-965-8591.