

2010 Albany Guardian Society Great Ideas in Aging Contest Community-based services category

Sponsoring Agency:

Staying In Place (SIP), is a not-for-profit self-help membership organization based in Woodstock, NY, and serving that township and surrounding communities in northern Ulster County.

Initial Problem:

Isolation and lack of community services for older residents who may no longer be able to keep up with home and property maintenance, bill-paying, shopping and other tasks but who wish to live independently in an intergenerational setting rather than an age-segregated retirement community.

To address this, SIP was formed in the spring of 2009 as an “aging in place village” that would help senior citizens remain in their own homes and integrated into their communities, with an emphasis on doing so in a rural and economically diverse area.

Program Description:

Staying in Place is open to people 50 and older offers the following:

- Referrals to discounted, reliable service providers for home repairs, maintenance, house cleaning, snow plowing, landscaping, and more;
- Recommendations for home healthcare agencies and personnel;
- A discounted home assessment and care plan;
- Information about local, private, and public agencies;
- Access to free or low-cost transportation;
- Bereavement support group;
- Assistance with paperwork and technology;
- Opportunities for volunteer service, including friendly visiting and transportation with mileage reimbursement to members;
- Advocacy for seniors in the community;
- Members only special events.

Staying in Place has a part-time coordinator for referrals, monthly meetings, a calendar of events available on line or through mailings, has an existing and expanding referral system for screened and discounted service vendors. SIP welcomes new community members and offers membership subsidies to those in need.

The social component, which includes a monthly luncheon with speaker, a weekly movie night, carpooling to nearby theater and music programs and, in partnership with AAUW, bus trips to more distant events and attractions, has proved especially popular, with a blog sipsoapbox.blogspot.com/ and occasional printed newsletters keeping members informed and involved. Volunteers who are not members often join in these activities.

SIP has also held several public programs with presentations by a local geriatrician, a social worker involved in home assessments and the science writer, author and authority on aging Jane Brody. Members of its board also address local civic groups and government bodies about the specifics of SIP and as advocates for seniors in general.

The program links consumers to community supports such as Woodstock Meals on Wheels, Caregiver Support groups, Alzheimer’s support groups, senior clubs, painting, writing and exercise classes and also connects members to government agencies including Ulster County Office for the Aging, UC Health Department, Social Security, and NYSOFA. SIP participates in the Woodstock Time Bank donating and banking time for reciprocity for its volunteers who are also Time Bank members.

How It Helps/Why Like:

The program helps the members and the community by:

- Supporting creative activities in Woodstock and surrounding areas;
- Allowing members to be confident in those they call upon to help them take care of their homes and themselves;
- Offering social contacts for those who desire them;
- Providing the community at large with a positive image of aging.

With an age range of early 60s to 99, SIP is itself an intergenerational organization, even moreso when volunteers are considered.

Transportation networking service among the members is an effective method for connecting people and programs to reduce social isolation.

Since SIP is a membership organization, all involved are encouraged to volunteer in some capacity, contribute ideas for services, suggest providers and initiate activities. They are not simply waiting for help, but actively shaping the organization.

Cost/Income Sources:

Over the course of 2010, its first full year of operation, SIP has spent some \$7,000. Its income is derived from annual membership dues of \$250, \$100 for each additional person in household, and gifts, including \$5,000 set aside for membership subsidies.

Special Issues/Characteristics:

Staying in Place is one of New York State's first rural model aging in place endeavors actualizing the needs of senior consumers as well as recognizing the available local community supports for living at home as long as possible. The program is a grassroots rural model organization combining the necessary services needed for safety and enriched quality of life while aging in place. The special quality of SIP is that consumers are given choices. They have the opportunity to choose to be a part of the community, be an informed and contributing member and supported in their choice as they age.

Members vary in age, diversity, economic status and need. The diversity of membership and the commitment of Staying in Place members to the success of this project and the ease of replication in other communities justify the submission of this response for a 2010 Great Ideas in Aging Award.

Respectively submitted,

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