

# ELDER JUSTICE SUMMIT REPORTS FROM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY ENTHUSIASM (MEGGIE)

Premise of this breakout session was to become inspired and brainstorm on ways to celebrate Good Neighbor Day, a day established by AARP. It is celebrated on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

***Discussed how we define our neighborhood. Some of the responses were:***

- Carmel Village – having a sense of community. A place where people gather
- We define neighborhood by proximity. Anyone that is in my sphere
- By the distinct personality and value of the neighborhood and community

***Asked people if they were close to their neighbors? Some of the responses were:***

- Some were so, so
- Some felt it was difficult to connect

***Talked about what makes a community thrive. Some of the responses were:***

- Openness
- Playfulness
- Support
- Random Recognition
- Freedom of expression
- Being able to take initiative
- Energy of the community helps it thrive
- Having accountability and responsibility
- Connectivity
- And a willingness to come up with our own identity and having a shared purpose

***Talked about what it means to be a good neighbor. Responses were:***

- Being available to help one another
- Being respectful
- Respecting boundaries
- Creating “excuses” to chat
- Looking out for each other
- Stepping out of our comfort zones
- Sharing

***Talked about what our superpowers are so we could use them to build connections. Responses were:***

- Build bridges and make connections
- To teach people, to help people
- To encourage others
- Being able to reframe a challenge into something positive
- Listening
- Team building
- Seeing the bigger picture and creating different options to help people

***Talked about Hero's in our lives. The responses were:***

- Nurses and social workers and people that go out into the homes of our community members
- Our children as they are building the future
- Daughters who are serving in the Military
- Our Veterans
- Church Communities
- Support Group Facilitators
- Acknowledgement for all the leaders at Oldemeyer Center that lead the different events
- School Coordinator's

***At end of session, each participant created an action plan on how they wanted to celebrate Good Neighbor Day in their community. Some of the ideas discussed were:***

- Block Yard Sales (VIP viewing day on Saturday for the neighbors, then sale on Sunday)
- Cul-de-sac Barbeque with activities for the families
- One participant would like to get the women of her church to bake cookies, pastries and desserts to give to local police and fire fighters
- Talk about having a baked goods chain. One resident would bake cookies and give it to their neighbor with the intention that their neighbor is going to bake some sweets and give it to another neighbor, creating a chain reaction
- Having a tea party in a skilled nursing facility
- At Christmas time they would have holiday parties and each house would pick an appetizer, dessert or drink to serve. They would go from house to house for 20 minutes sharing their food. People opened their house and they felt connected.

In their action plans, they were able to identify who they could collaborate with within their communities and what some of the barriers might be, and what supplies they would need. The goal is to take these action plans and run with them within their communities.

## **MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD (WARREN)**

The idea of this breakout session was to help everyone know how to express issues or concerns to our elected officials at various levels of government.

They started with a panel which consisted of:

- Supervisor Jane Parker, at the County level
- Erica Parker, from the Office of Assembly Member Mark Stone, at the State level
- Carina Chavez, from Office of Congressman Jimmy Panetta, at the Federal level

Things that came out very quickly were that all levels of government really do want to hear from us. It is not an inconvenience to them when they get an email, phone call, letter, or a visit. There is no wrong office (State, County, etc..). They will take the information and forward to the correct person, or they will reach out to you to advise you.

There was a lot of discussion on how we would do this. Do we need to have a lot of signatures on a petition to be heard? Or is just a letter from one person going to make a difference? Or how many times should we go back and contact them on the same issue? Should we include a lot of detail or say – thumbs up on this piece of legislation and we are done? Bottomline, they will take what you want to send to them.

After the breakout session panel discussion, there was a QA, and some of the questions asked were:

- Dental Care for Seniors. Which is now being offered at the Clinica De Salud on Fremont Street
- Funding for the Prunedale Senior Center
- Social Security 2100 Legislation, which has been dragging or fading, or no one is hearing anything about it.
- Accessible ride shares for taxis, ubers, public transportations
- Accessibility issues for seniors, for wheelchair access. How do we go about making that happen?
- How to track legislation? I need to find what is going on in the world of vehicle accessibility. Are there other website, etc.
- There was a comment about how slow and painful the legislative process could be. No matter how we are trying to raise our voices and make a change, sometimes we feel hopeless.
- There was a discussion around the complexity of the legislative system and how there are a lot of steps to go through. A new piece of legislation just doesn't go out, and it gets voted. It must go through a lot of committee work, budget considerations, legal constraints, etc. Nothing really happens fast. Need to progress throughout the steps for it to be done right.

## **GENERATION “NETWORK” (SADIE)**

This breakout session was about brainstorming and connecting situations that were already happening in the community. One of the big questions they had was:

- **Where is the hub?**
  - How are we going to continue this?
  - Where are we going to meet?
  - How are we going to communicate?

With this type of project, it is not going to happen in one day. This is something that is going to have to be carried on.

The group did a brainstorm sessions and participants put dots on their selections and voted on the most important points that they were going to be discussing and going forward with. Some of the high voted main points were:

- Cooking and Home Economics.
  - Getting seniors to teach younger children about sewing, knitting, cooking and nutrition.
- Cultural and History Classes.
  - Seniors to talk about and teach the real history the way it was seen through their eyes, not just textbook history.
- Art Programs
  - Mixing children and seniors with art projects.
- Community Gardens

The group decided that since there are so many ideas, to have a pilot program where they would meet once a week, or once a month, and touch on each one of these types of activities to see which one was working best. And of course, what are the next steps? How do we stay connected? And how do we put together a hub?

CSUMB said that they would be interested and felt that this is something they could do to help give us a central location. They will be following up with them.

The next steps are to stay connected. Everyone filled out a document providing their email.

The group also discussed the following types of hubs:

- Using a Facebook page to stay engaged to notify others that they have an activity going on, or they have volunteers, how can we match you?
- Meeting face to face. They have many people interested in meeting again face to face.

## **ISOLATION TASK FORCE (AIMEE CUDA)**

The way the group developed was a mix of things that Allison and Aimee came up with together. For Allison's part, she was inspired by the movie, "We Are Still Here". The other driving factor was when they were evaluating where they wanted to do the symposium, and what they wanted to focus on.

Around the room we saw a lot of professionals, and a lot of people we see coming to this event every year, but isolated seniors do not always attend. Initially they thought they wanted to do the Summit event at a senior residence of some kind. Canterbury Woods was a very nice setup and was a top contender, but ultimately with 130 participants, and parking constraints, they ended up holding it at the Oldemeyer Center.

It forced them to evaluate how we reach people who are isolated? How do we reach into living environments where people aren't necessarily participating? And that was the starting point for the group.

They started with the concepts that were a challenge. They looked at what is working, what isn't working. How can we expand and enhance what is already there? There are many people doing fabulous work in building awareness for what is available. They focused a bit on changing the conversation, which Dr. Arbore focused on. It's not about going in there and saying, "Oh, so your lonely, well let's fix your loneliness." It's about how we engage people with conversation and change the way we talk about things.

One of the things that was brought up was there is an organic thing that happens when people go to a place like Rehab. They go get exercise. They are forced out of their home and they are in an environment that you wouldn't think of as a natural match for addressing isolation. Suddenly that instance pulls them out of their house, drives some interaction that forces that person out of their home. Reaching into places like Grocery Stores, Rehabilitation Facilities, Doctor's Offices, Salons, places where people must go, and start the conversation at that level.

They talked about building trust, grief and loneliness, and removing the taboo of talking about grief and the loneliness that comes with it, not just as Monterey County, or Seaside, but on a global level, how changing that perspective on talking about grief is very important. Talked also talked about awareness and collaborations between agencies.

These were all the topics talked about, but what was also important to them was – What are we going to do? Is this going to be a symposium where we talk about all of this and we have well intentions to go out into the Community, but it never quite hits the mark? The next steps talked about were:

- Participants agreed on a follow up group.
  - Participants filled out a card agreeing to continue to work with the group.
- Participants wanted to focus on strategic collaborations.
  - Blue Zones is already in place.
  - Friendship Line - how do we get it in Monterey County? People can call in without being part of our County but have a new initiative where we are collaborating with the Friendship Line so that we can call out. People who are isolated aren't going to be calling in. We need to be calling out to them.
- Discussed talking about Friendship line and other ideas to the Area Agency on Aging and AARP, to try to get some synergy around bringing those concepts here.

- Talked about September 28 Good Neighbor Day. Encourage agencies to promote Good Neighbor Day as they all have their constituents that are with them all the time.
- Talked about changing the conversation and doing some curriculum adjustments in college settings. This just started to briefly scratch the surface at CSUMB with a focus on Geriatrics and having some volunteering in the senior agencies as part of that curriculum.
- Forcing the dates on the calendar.
  - If it's on the calendar, you are going to do it. If it is not, you won't. Putting those dates on the calendar, like the September 28 Good Neighbor Day and Senior Resource Day Fair.
- Partnering with senior complexes and encouraging story telling.
  - There are a lot of little initiatives out there, especially around veterans, on story telling. Even on a personal level, encourage story telling amongst individuals. That is an important piece on getting someone to break out of their shell.