

## AoA Older Americans Month 2008 Program Champion



**Project:** Aging Together Partnership

**Organization:** Aging Together

### **Project Description**

Aging Together, a broad consortium of over 100 organizations and individuals in the 5 counties of the Rappahannock Rapidan region of Virginia is a collaborative effort to help our localities prepare for an unprecedented growth in the older population and to assure that local residents will have the services and supports they need as they age. Partners include the area agency on aging, 5 departments of social services, a wide variety of service providers, local governments, community hospitals, United Way, AARP, civic organizations, schools, the faith community, caregivers, and of course, seniors themselves. At its inception, the partnership adopted the name Aging Together to reflect the reality that aging affects everyone and that the only way to improve supports for older adults and their families is to work collaboratively.

Aging Together's vision for aging is that citizens living in the Rappahannock Rapidan area retain their sense of place and community, serve and contribute to that community, and are assured of help when needed from family, friends, neighbors and places of worship, as well as from helping organizations and a responsive government. All seniors are valued and are able to access care options in a manner reflective of their needs and preferences.

Aging Together does not provide direct services but rather focuses on facilitating collaborations that create and enhance supports for older persons delivered through various partner organizations. Teams in each county meet monthly to develop resources to address needs within each area. Regional workgroups collaborate across agencies and counties to develop responses to region wide issues. County Resource Specialists in each county assist with the development of services including building a strong volunteer network. Aging Together is proud to be part of a select group of partnerships supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Community Partnerships for Older Adults* program, and to date has generated \$1.6 million to enhance services in the region.

Examples of regional service expansion that Aging Together has facilitated since beginning to implement its strategic plan in May 2006 include:

◆ ***Adult Day Care Expansion*** – As 4 of the 5 counties had no adult day care program, Aging Together partners collaborated on the opening of DayBreak, a new regional Adult Day Care Center.

◆ ***Rural Transportation Enhancement*** – One of the local County Aging Together Teams initiated a Volunteer Transportation system for seniors that since its inception in August 2007 has recruited 15 volunteers and provided 75 trips for elder citizens to physician appointments, pharmacy visits and shopping. The other Aging Together County teams are now replicating this model within their localities.

◆ ***Health, Wellness and Caregiver Supports*** – Aging Together helped the local Area Agency on Aging secure funding from the Virginia Healthcare Foundation to assist low-income adults obtain free prescription medicine. In the first year, 210 individuals obtained medication worth \$309,944. The Health and Wellness Workgroup provides free or discounted medical ID's to area seniors and family caregivers, and is working on a project to distribute a geriatric assessment tool to be used by primary care physicians. The Caregiver Support Workgroup implemented locally based training for family caregivers that supported 75 caregivers in 2007.

◆ ***Long Term Care Workforce Recruitment and Retention*** – Aging Together collaborates with the local Community College to offer a series of classes for supervisors and direct care staff, designed to promote retention of long term care workers. The Workforce Development Workgroup conducts an annual recognition program for outstanding front line workers in the LTC field.

◆ ***Information for Consumers & Decision-Makers*** – Owing to the work done by Aging Together, this region has been selected to be an Aging and Disability Resource Center as a pilot in the state's No Wrong Door initiative. Aging Together has assured that local providers post detailed local resource information on the state's Senior Navigator website, and that consumers have access to that information in various ways.

For more information visit [www.agingtogether.org](http://www.agingtogether.org) or contact Chris Miller at (540) 829-6405 or via e-mail at [cmiller@agingtogether.org](mailto:cmiller@agingtogether.org)