

COUNCIL ON AGING

COA Mission Statement

The Stow Council On Aging is here to provide support to seniors by being a resource of information on elder affairs, provide social activities, outreach services, and help seniors to remain in their homes as long as safely possible.

Executive Summary

Services that the Council on Aging (COA) provides are listed in detail below. They include but are not limited to, congregate meals, meals on wheels, drop in center, health and educational classes, transportation, social events, newsletters, fuel assistance, AARP tax preparation, outreach and referral services and much more.

Congregate meals are served in Stow on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week. Stow does not have a Senior Center that can provide meals five days a week, therefore meals are served at First Parish Church of Stow and Acton in their Fellowship Hall two days only. The average number of people that attend the Meal Site is 23. For a small fee of \$2.00, the Meal Site not only provides nutritional meals but also provides social interaction. The Council On Aging Van Service transports many of the people that attend the Meal Site.

Meals On Wheels is an important part of our Nutritional program. Meals are provided to people who would not be preparing meals for themselves otherwise. These people may be unable to prepare meals for themselves due to recovering from a recent hospital stay, an illness, or frailty.

Volunteers contribute many hours working at the Meal Site or delivering Meals On Wheels. Without their help many Stow seniors would not enjoy the quality of life good nutrition brings.

We thank First Parish Church for their generosity in letting us use their hall for the Meal Site.

The Drop-In Center is located in the Friendship Room in the lower level of the Town Building. It is open five days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Many social, cultural, Health and educational events are held in the Friendship Room through out the year. It is also available for people to come in, sit, read the newspaper, drink coffee, and chat.

The Director, Suzanne Morin, is available five days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. unless out of the office on business. The Outreach Coordinator, Sharon Funkhouser, works, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays and the Outreach Worker, Betty Scesny, is in the office from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This staff is here to service seniors and people with disabilities. They are also a good resource to others who are concerned with care and services for their loved ones.

Studio Art Classes explore several mediums for the beginner to advanced artist. Under the director of Instructor Cynthia Durost of Wild Rose Studio in Acton, seniors are able to explore their hidden talents and creativity through acrylics, oils, pastels, charcoal, etc. in a relaxed and self-paced environment. Classes meet on Monday mornings from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. in the Friendship Room at Town Building. A donation of \$8.00 is requested to assist in the funding of this class. A private donor and the artists themselves and the Friends of the COA fund this class in large part.

Exercise aerobic classes are held on Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays at St. Isidore's Church Hall from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., September through June. This wellness activity is funded in part by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, The Friends of the COA, and a donation of \$2.00 per student/per class. We thank St. Isidore's Church for their generosity in letting us use their hall for these classes. Classes are for ages 50+.

Tai Chi is held in Town Hall on Thursday mornings from 9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Donations are welcome.

Health Clinics are held through out the year. The Podiatry Clinic is held monthly in the Friendship Room, by appointment.

Transportation is provided to all seniors and disabled and/or handicapped persons of Stow. This service continues to grow each year, and remains the number one service provided to seniors by the COA. The vans provide transportation for food shopping, errands, doctor and hospital appointments, exercise programs, hair appointments, club meetings, wellness clinics, congregated meals, Town Meeting and Town Elections, Drop-In Center activities, special events and meetings. The van operates regularly Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. We request a 24-hour notice for these appointments. Doctor and hospital appointments should be at least 48 hours in advance or as soon as they are made. The vans will provide transportation to Acton, Concord, Hudson, Marlborough, Maynard, and Lincoln and within Stow. We are still waiting for the van which we will receive as a result of a mobility grant from the State of Massachusetts to replace our most used van which has a wheel chair lift and is needed to transport our non-ambulatory riders. The Grant was applied for in the fall of 2005. The current van is old, rusting and has many mechanical problems. Thanks to The Friends of the COA for helping to pay for repairs to keep the van on the road as long as possible.

The Board would like to thank van drivers Beverly Benoit, Jim and Betty Sauta, Janet Fritz, and especially Martha Wheeler who retired this year, for their continued dedication and service to this program. Contact the C.O.A. office for reservations 897-1880

The COA will also arrange for a volunteer driver for special doctor or hospital appointments that are out of the area covered by the van.

The Staff of the COA with approval of the Director arranges events. Activities are planned with the hope that they will meet the varied interest of the people of Stow. Some trips are cultural, while others may be social. Day trips are scheduled throughout the year. Trips and events are beneficial to the social and recreational needs of our seniors. Due to the inadequate space we have in the basement of the Town Building we are limited in the number and type of events we can schedule.

Monthly Newsletter: A monthly newsletter is prepared with the approval of the Director and mailed to all seniors in Stow. The effort of several dedicated seniors enables us to get this publication mailed. We thank all the Newsletter Volunteers for their hard work in getting it out each month. This is our most important vehicle in getting information to the Stow senior population. The Patrons who advertise, the Community Chest, the Friends of the COA and the E.O.E.A make the printing and mailing of the newsletter possible.

S.M.O.C.: Fuel assistance applications are accepted by all office staff member of the COA from November through March. Assistance is available to all income-eligible persons of Stow. To

receive information on fuel assistance or to request an appointment, call the Council office at 897-1880. All information is kept in strictest confidentiality.

Tax Preparation Assistance is a free service sponsored by A.A.R.P. An A.A.R.P. volunteer will meet with seniors of Stow from February thru April for tax preparation and to apply for "Circuit Breaker". To schedule an appointment the client must call the C.O.A.

State Representative Patricia Walrath takes time from her busy schedule to meet with our seniors to discuss issues of concern to elders and to inform them of legislation, which may affect them. These meetings take place on the third Thursday of each month between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. at the First Parish Church during the meal site. All seniors are welcome.

Outreach and Referrals are provided to assist those elders of Stow who may be homebound, frail or lonely, and not receiving services from outside agencies. Sharon Funkhouser, our Outreach Volunteer and her team of volunteers will visit, shop or assist in any way to inform and refer our elders of services that are available to them through the COA and outside services such as Minuteman Home Care, Emerson Home Care and other local agencies. If you are interested in becoming a valued volunteer in our Outreach Program, call the C.O.A. office at 897-1880. Volunteers are needed during the weekday, even if just for one hour.

Friends of the Council on Aging Board is composed of volunteer members of the community at large, citizens of Stow, and the Council on Aging Director (non voted member.) The Board meets the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. in the Friendship Room at Town Building. All interested citizens and are welcome to attend. The goal of the Friends of the C.O.A. is to raise funds to supplement the programs and activities of the Council on Aging. They raise funds for the Van Operating Fund, Meal Site Coordinator salary, Meal Site supplies, and special projects, programs, or activities of the C.O.A.

You may become a "Friend" of the C.O.A. by either volunteering, sponsoring a special project, or to make a monetary contribution. Call the C.O.A. office at 897-1880, or any of the Friends of the COA Board members. We thank the Friends of the COA members and volunteers for all their hard work this past year and the support they offer the Stow C.O.A. all year long.

Minuteman Home Care provides many thousands of dollars worth of services to the senior population of Stow each year in return for our contribution of more than \$900. Minuteman Home Care is sponsored by state and federal grants. We wish to thank them for all their services and assistance to the seniors and the Council office.

Senior Tax Work-Off Program is a program offered by the Town of Stow for seniors 60+ who have lived in the town of Stow for at least six months, are a home owner, and meet the income requirements. An eligible senior may "work" up to 111 hours or \$700 worth of rebate on their real estate taxes. "Jobs" are filled within participating town departments. This is a double benefit to both the client and the town. For more information call the C.O.A. office at 897-1880. All information is kept in the strictest confidence.

Senior Computers is a program that allows us to offer seniors used and upgraded computers. With the help of Ronald Hill of Stow, we are able to give computers to seniors for use in their own homes. Ron takes used computers, updates them, delivers and sets them up. He also will provide user training. This program is funded by a small donation from the seniors and by the Stow Friends of C.O.A. We thank the Friends for their generous support of this highly successful new program.

Thank you to all the volunteers that help out in the office. The Seniors of Stow and the Council On Aging, rely on the many hours the volunteers who put in of time and dedication to making the quality of life for the seniors of Stow much better. Without their help the Council On Aging could not function.

There is much talk lately of the aging of the “Baby Boomers” and how it will impact the services offered. I feel that this age group will be an asset to towns. These are people that are technologically aware, tend to live a healthy life style, and therefore are less physically limited. These people will be available to volunteer in a few years and I hope they will think of the Council On Aging when they are looking for someplace to put their energy and talents. They have many talents and will be a great resource.

Thank you St. Isidore’s, the Union Church, and the First Parish Church of Stow for allowing us to use their facilities to conduct programs throughout the year. We extend our sincere appreciation to all of the volunteers who assist the Council on Aging in so many capacities. They are the “life-line” of our department.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the citizens of Stow for their support at Town Meeting this past year in assisting the Council on Aging with their goals of providing the seniors of Stow with a meaningful quality of life as they age.

We wish to extend our gratitude to the Stow Highway Department for their continuous assistance in keeping our vans serviced and safe for the roads.

Without the Friends of the COA we would not be able to exist. They provide financial support that is needed to sustain a thriving Council on Aging for the Town of Stow. Stow is very fortunate to have such a caring and devoted Friends group.

Last of all we wish to thank the Senior Citizens of Stow who give so much of their time and talents to help make the Council on Aging a place where a Stow Senior can explore personal growth, new opportunities, friendship and camaraderie, and contribute to the community as a volunteer. So many of our seniors may be “retired” but are still very productive and “working” individuals. The seniors help themselves and others day in and day out. We are grateful for all you do and admire their spirit of enthusiasm.

Respectfully submitted,

James Sauta, Chairman
Newton Wesley, Vice Chairman
Nancy Kyle
Brian Burke
Betty Holly
George Dargaty
Nancy Chaisson

Alice Olsen
Jo Langley, Associate
Eleanor Beaudette, Secretary

Suzanne Morin, Director
Sharon Funkhouser, Outreach Coordinator
Elizabeth Scesny, Outreach Worker