

2006 Annual Report of the Williamsburg Council On Aging & Regional Senior Center

A Public Hearing was held February 2nd about the proposed regional senior center. About 50 people attended the hearing at which representatives of Hilltown Community Development Corporation presented information and answered questions. At a very well attended meeting on February 16th, the Select Board voted to proceed with the HCDC application to move forward with more planning for a senior center. This means that voters will have the opportunity to vote on this issue. HCDC's application for more funding was approved, however, new federal regulations have delayed the beginning of this next planning phase.

The COA was represented at Emergency Dispensing Site committee meetings. Both Fran Goebel and Mary Wheelan have been trained and certified by FEMA in two courses: *Introduction to Incident Command System* and *National Incident Management System (NIMS) an Introduction*. They were required to take this training along with other town employees. **It is important to let the Council On Aging know if you or a significant other is homebound so that, in the event of an emergency, we would be able to make sure emergency personnel know to make special arrangements for you.** You cannot assume other social service agencies will give us this information because of concerns about confidentiality. So please keep us informed. People under 60 who are homebound are welcome to contact us as well with this information.

The COA and the Hilltown Alliance of Musicians and Songwriters, Inc. co-sponsored the Jamboree held at the Ann T. Dunphy School on May 20th with funding provided by Highland Valley Elder Services. It was attended by over 100 people and received very good media coverage. More importantly, it was an event that not only entertained a lot of elders and people of all ages but also included elders among the entertainers. In fact, *The Old Folks at Home* (Smitty and Mae Smith) received an award for outstanding achievement in bringing the joy of music to their community. Information tables were set up around the gym, too, so people could take brochures and other literature about resources for elders and their caregivers. Representatives of some agencies were also present to answer questions.

Another musical event held on December 14th was also well received. The Ann T. Dunphy School Chorus performed for elders in the Town Offices Auditorium. They sang multi-cultural holiday songs. Many proud parents attended the event as well. Other special events included: cookouts, the pancake breakfast, and the Volunteer Recognition dinner held in October at the Williamsburg Congregational Church.

While Williamsburg is currently in fairly good shape regarding provision of transportation to elders in town, the fact is that some other hilltowns have experienced some significant problems. Repetitive transportation for things like dialysis and adult day health can quickly exhaust resources. The Williamsburg COA has been working closely with other members of the Hilltown Consortium of Councils On Aging and the Hilltown

Elder Network to make the most out of existing resources. And, Executive Director, Mary Wheelan, has been to meetings of the Independent Transportation Network (a national organization) to learn about this potential resource being developed here in Western Massachusetts as a regional chapter. As the number of elders in need of transportation grows rapidly over the next couple of decades we will need to have enough options in place to meet the increasing demand.

The Williamsburg COA began collecting used cell phones in 2006. The Hampshire County Sheriff's Office arranges for the phones to be adapted for emergency use only. The phones are then given to Williamsburg elders who are instructed in their use. Since they are for emergency use only there is no cost for service and the donated phones are, of course, free of charge. Anyone who would like a phone can contact Fran at 268-8407. To donate a used cell phone you can either bring it to the COA office or put it in the receptacle set aside for that purpose at the Transfer Station.

Services and activities provided by or at the Council On Aging during 2006 included: brown bag; foot care; blood pressure screenings; assistive equipment loans; hearing screenings; flu shot clinic; SHINE volunteer (health insurance counseling); AARP Tax Preparation; transportation; information and referrals; recreational activities; speakers; classes (computer, tai chi, line dancing, quilting, etc.); workshops; lunches at meal site on Wednesdays and Thursdays; assistance with food stamp, fuels assistance and other applications; housing information; and outreach. Also four quarterly issues of *Mature Matters* were mailed town-wide. In between each of those issues a smaller publication called *Mini-Matters* was sent out to elders. Thanks to the support of advertisers we are able to afford more frequent communication than we could in past years. And, thanks to the work of dedicated volunteers as well as paid staff we are able to provide all the services listed above. To learn more about how you can help out call Fran Goebel, Program Director, at 268-8407.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Wheelan
Executive Director