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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY

A serendipitous series of events in 2015 has brought Bethel into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. In February, several of us read Atul Gawande's book, "Being Mortal," that addresses quality of life for the elderly. We were positively energized by the ideas presented, and began talking with others about how we might try to implement positive changes to benefit the elderly in our community.

Then in March, Rosabelle Tiff and Jackie Cressy attended a local AARP meeting that featured AARP Maine Consultant Peter Morelli speaking about the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Peter offered to help us explore this possibility for Bethel. At the time, the "To Your Health" Committee of Western Mountains Senior College was already planning spring programs on end-of-life issues and aging in place, and Peter was asked to be a panelist for the latter program in May. That program brought out 65 community members, so it was obvious that there was real need to explore the issue. In June, Peter came to Bethel, met with a group of interested folks, and really set us on our path to Bethel's membership in the Network, which was accomplished in September, 2015.

What started out to be just one town's effort has rapidly grown into a regional effort involving three other towns - Greenwood, Newry and Woodstock. This regionalization is fully supported by AARP Maine. AARP Maine gave the town of Bethel a nearly \$7000 grant to begin identifying the needs and assets of the communities. Over 600 surveys were distributed to those 50 and over in the area. (See Appendix A for the survey.) One-third were returned, and then analyzed by the Lewiston, Maine firm, Analytic Insight. As noted in the Community Profile section, the survey highlighted many concerns of this age group, most notably transportation, help with intermittent household chores, and the need for a gathering place or community center. (See Appendix B for the survey analysis.)

In January of 2016, the survey results were presented to a large group of interested citizens. This was rapidly followed by formation of a Transportation Task Force composed of residents from the four towns and representatives from Western Maine Transportation Services, a local van service, and Maine Adaptive Sports. This task force has been meeting regularly since its formation, has received a \$3000 grant from the Maine Community Foundation to pay for a transportation coordinator, and has teamed up with a non-profit organization, Community Concepts, that provides transportation services already by using volunteer drivers. By June of 2016, three of the towns had appropriated money in their town budgets to support the Age-Friendly Community Project. The Town of Bethel has been acting as the fiscal agent for the Age-Friendly Community project team.

While writing the action plan was a priority, there were so many ideas and interest in actually getting some projects started, that many of the action items listed in the plan are already under way. Task forces have been hard at work even as the Action Plan was being fleshed out. (For a detailed chronology, see Appendix C.)

THE PROJECT TEAM

The following people have been deeply involved in the work of developing the action plan:

Eliza Barnes, Bethel	Linda McDonough, Bethel
Jane Chandler, Woodstock	Brooks Morton, Newry
Jim Chandler, Woodstock	Peter Musso, Jr., Greenwood
Allen Cressy, Bethel	Jan Stowell, Bethel
Jackie Cressy, Bethel	Rosabelle Tifft, Bethel
Nancy Davis, Bethel/Albany Twp	Judy Whitman, Bethel
Kay Larson, Bethel	

In addition, we are grateful for the support of the town managers and select board members:

Christine Landes, Bethel Town Manager
Kimberly Sparks, Greenwood Town Manager
Amy Bernard, Newry Town Administrator
Vern Maxfield, Woodstock Town Manager

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Four communities have joined together in the Age-Friendly Community Network in order to make the most of the resources of our area. Bethel is the service area for several surrounding towns and citizens of these towns make wide use of services and activities available here. Each town will be described separately. A description of the characteristics they share will follow, showing the benefits of having a consolidated approach to age-friendly activities and initiatives.

THE FOUR TOWNS

BETHEL

“Bethel is a town where the common is uncommon; where Brooks Bros. sells pliers and wrenches, Victoria's Secret is a chocolate raspberry dessert and the Timberland Outlet is an exit for logging trucks. Astride the Androscoggin River, nestled at the base of Paradise Hill, Bethel is truly ‘just this side of Paradise.’¹ Most rural villages are one-industry towns. Bethel is a rare blend of farming, forestry, woods product manufacturing, education and tourism. In the past decade, the community has become home to active retirees and professionals who have chosen the small lifestyle over that of the megalopolis.”

Situated in the fertile Androscoggin River valley in Oxford County and surrounded by some of the highest mountains in Maine, Bethel was first settled by people of European descent in 1774. Farming and timber cutting were the principal occupations of these first inhabitants, who settled near the rich intervals alongside the Androscoggin River. Today, agriculture and forest-related activities remain important in Bethel, although the marginal hillside farms of the nineteenth century long ago turned back to woods. Manufacturing and tourism became major factors in the town's economy with the arrival of the railroad in 1851. Tourism remains a major economic driver, especially in winter, with two nearby ski areas, and the town remains popular for its beautiful natural setting and historic charm.

Bethel has long been a significant educational center for the region. Founded in 1836, Gould Academy continues to function as one of the Northeast's premier college-preparatory schools. In the late nineteenth century, Bethel became the site of Dr. John Gehring's pioneering clinic for the treatment of persons with nervous disorders.

¹ Wende Gray, on the Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce website, <http://www.bethelmaine.com>

Since the turn of the twentieth century, Bethel has experienced an unusual number of outside influences for a town of its size and inland location. These have caused Bethel to be somewhat different in character from other towns. For example, both Outward Bound and National Training Laboratories (NTL) have had profound and long-lasting influences on the open-mindedness of the communities. Many active retirees have settled here to enjoy the outdoor activities available throughout the year, and many of the Gould Academy faculty stay after they finish their teaching careers. Along with the many families who have lived here for generations, these additions to the population add to the vibrancy of the cultural and social scene.

With a total area of 65.91 square miles, and an estimated 2014 population of 2615, Bethel has a population density of roughly 40 people per square mile. The population has stayed above the 2000 mark since the 1930s, with only a slight gradual increase over the years. Though retirees continue to settle in the community, the lack of good jobs in the region frequently results in younger people just starting careers or families to move to other states, keeping the population stable, but increasingly older. For example, the median age given in the 2010 census was 42.9 years, but the estimate for 2014 is 45.3. Residents 55 and older make up 43.7% of the total population; those 65 and older are 16.75% of the total.²

GREENWOOD

“Located in the foothills of the western Maine mountains, Greenwood is home to family-friendly Mt. Abram Ski Area, as well as some of the region’s most picturesque lakes and ponds. Whether you’re looking for the perfect place to spend a day, a week, or a lifetime, you’ll find it in Greenwood. Opportunities for outdoor recreation abound in this small town, which is only a short drive from the regional shopping and service areas of Bethel, Rumford, and Paris.”³ Greenwood may be best known as the birthplace of L.L. Bean.

Greenwood was once a farming and manufacturing town. The town was first settled by those seeking inexpensive land for agriculture and underdeveloped water power sites for milling. The first saw and shingle mill was constructed at “Greenwood City” in 1805. In the mid- 1800’s, the wood industry moved to the Village of Locke’s Mills as a result of the railroad and a fire which destroyed Greenwood City.

The population was estimated to be 967 in 2014. The village of Locke Mills, on State Route 26 in the northern part of Greenwood, is the town's urban center and largest settlement. Encompassing 43.08 square miles, Greenwood’s natural features include all or part of 10 great ponds (i.e., ponds or lakes held in trust by the state for public use)

² All statistics are taken from the US Census Bureau charts found at the American Fact Finder website <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

³ from the town’ website at <http://www.greenwoodmaine.org>

and numerous streams and rivers. The median age in Greenwood is 40.2. Residents 55 and older make up 27.7% of the total population; those 65 and older are 11.89% of the total.

NEWRY

Newry is probably best known as the home of the Sunday River Ski Resort, which draws skiers from all over the country, as well as Canada and Europe. Consequently, this little town of 332 residents has a proportionately large seasonal (winter) population.

First called Sunday River Plantation, Newry was settled in 1781, but the settlement was abandoned in 1782 after an Indian attack. In 1794, it was resettled and named Bostwick Plantation, but was renamed in 1805 by settlers who had come from Newry in what is now Northern Ireland. Farms were established on the intervalles, which had excellent soil, with hay being the principal crop. Slopes of the mountains provided pasturage for grazing animals. A sawmill and gristmill were built on the Bear River, and by 1870 the population was 416.

The town has a total area of 61.55 square miles and is drained by the Bear River and Sunday River, which both flow into the Androscoggin River. The two valleys, separated by mountains, create a sense of two towns. The estimated median age in the town as of 2014 was 46.6 years. Residents 55 and older make up 35.5% of the total population; those 65 and older are 14.46% of the total.

WOODSTOCK

The area now comprising Woodstock was first settled in 1797. In 1815, the Governor of Massachusetts signed a petition incorporating it as the Town of Woodstock. The village of Bryant Pond, on State Route 26 in the northern part of Woodstock, is the town's service center and largest settlement. Woodstock is the location of the last hand-cranked telephone in the United States.

Woodstock was traditionally a farming and manufacturing community. While the Stowell Wood Products and Mann's mills have closed, logging and forestry remain important to this community. Patriots Renewables has a wind project on Spruce Mountain in the town. Lakes and iconic ledges highlight the scenery.

The 4-H School at Bryant Pond is a vibrant facility for conservation education for young people. The school has expanded from just a summer program to year-long hands-on educational opportunities. In addition, the 4-H School hosts the Telstar High School Freshman Academy.

The town has a total area of 46.88 square miles. According to estimates for 2014, the population is 1,243, and the median age is 48.8 years. Residents 55 and older make up 39.3% of the total population; those 65 and older are 21.64% of the total.

COMMONALITIES

Residents of Greenwood, Newry and Woodstock travel regularly to Bethel for area services like pharmacy, health center and shopping. All four towns are cooperating on a Heart & Soul Initiative, supported by the Orton Family Foundation and managed by the Bethel Area Nonprofit Collaborative - a group of non-profits who work together as they pursue their individual missions. The four towns are also in the same School Administrative District #44. These examples of cooperation among the towns make it reasonable to work toward becoming age-friendly communities together.

Residents of the area take advantage of the many social and educational opportunities that tend to be centered in the town of Bethel. Among them are programs offered by the Mahoosuc Land Trust, the Bethel Historical Society, and Western Mountains Senior College, a life-long learning institution. The brand new Maine Mineral and Gem Museum will showcase the geological history of this region with its displays of Maine minerals and gems. Both Gould Academy, a private 4-year prep school and Telstar, the public junior-senior high school, offer programs to the public.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are available year-round. Well-maintained hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobile trails abound throughout the area. Two downhill ski areas cater to every level of skier. Many lakes and ponds and the Androscoggin River provide fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Several businesses exist to cater to both residents and visitors.

When one reviews the demographic data charted in Appendix D, it is easy to see other factors the four communities have in common. In all four, the median age ranges in the forties, higher than the median for the U.S. as a whole - 37.8, but in line with the median average for Maine - 44.1. As more retirees move here to enjoy the many outdoor recreation and cultural/educational opportunities, and younger people move away to find more secure, full-time employment, the median age is likely to rise, putting pressure on health services and transportation needs in particular.

The survey carried out in the fall of 2015 demonstrated that attitudes and areas of concern about the problems faced by Seniors are shared across the region. The vast majority of respondents (92.2%) said it was somewhat or very important to remain in their community as they age, with almost two out of three (64.8%) saying it was very important.

When asked how well the Bethel area community provides for its Seniors in a variety of areas, respondents rated volunteer opportunities and educational and social

opportunities most favorably (at 2.4 on a scale of 1 to 3). When asked to rate their own community as a place for people to live as they age, just one in four respondents (26.9%) said it was very good and the majority rated Bethel and the surrounding communities as good (33.3%) or fair (32.9%). Less than one in ten (6.8%) rated their community as a poor place to age.

Transportation was the main issue driving residents' concern about aging in the Bethel area. A substantial percentage of respondents (42.3%) said needing more accessible transportation would be a factor in their decision to move from the area as they age. Half of respondents (50.7%) said needing help with health care or household tasks would impact their decision to move. Help with household chores, home healthcare and support were of special concern to those living in surrounding areas. Other issues of importance that emerged include access to home care services, particularly in surrounding areas, a community center and affordable housing.⁴

The responses demonstrate that the time is ripe for encouraging changes to make our communities more age-friendly for all.

⁴ Survey Executive Summary

THE ACTION PLAN

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Project Team that developed this Action Plan over several months and many meetings decided to group the various activities into three broad categories:

- A. those on-going projects and activities that are already in place or are being put into place now, that will continue be supported by this Initiative,
- B. those projects that we expect to have completed and/or moved to “sustaining” status by the end of the period covered by this plan,
- C. those projects that are complicated and long-term, requiring multiple phases and many resources to be accomplished.

On-going projects tend to be those that have a good track record and have been continuing for some time. One example is the work being done by the Western Mountains Senior College. This organization has as its focus people fifty and over who want to learn just for the fun of it, and enjoy doing this learning in company with others. The Age-Friendly Community Initiative participants can “talk up” the courses and activities offered each quarter; they can also propose and offer to develop courses and workshops that specifically address the challenges of aging.

Category B projects are the meat of this action plan that is intended to cover the period from October 2016 to September 2017. When completed, some may become activities that will be continued. An example would be the development of a daily wellness check system for residents who would like that security. Another would be the winter exercise program which partners the Bethel Recreation Committee with facilities owned by Gould Academy.

Long-term projects are the most difficult to plan and implement. They require looking into the future, assessing where the resources - especially money - will come from, and a great deal of commitment on the part of those who undertake such a project. We have identified two at this time. One way of dealing with the many challenges of a strongly-expressed need such as a community center is to begin by identifying what we do have - what spaces are available now where people can gather, making groups aware of them, and starting programs that make use of them.

Each project or activity will have its own task force of people committed to accomplishing the goals and objectives set out in the action plan. When a project is completed to the satisfaction of the members and the Advisory Council, the task force can disband, and the individuals can move on to other projects. The chairperson of any task force will provide written progress reports to the Advisory Council. This person may

serve on the Council as well, but does not need to be a member. If the project is to become an on-going activity, at least one task force member should be assigned to see that it continues on track. The Advisory Council will be responsible for seeing that no domain is neglected over the long-term.

The persons responsible for each of the projects outlined below, and all other information not included here in the narrative, can be found in the accompanying Action Plan Project Summary chart in Appendix E.

A. ON-GOING PROJECTS

1. Development of an Advisory Council (Infrastructure)

The goal of this project to put in place a fully-functioning group that both reports to the towns and oversees the progress of the various task forces. As we began work on the Action Plan, we realized that because there would be so many different projects, large and small, that two things needed to be adjusted. First, we changed the name to “Age-Friendly Community Initiative,” to differentiate the overall effort from specific projects. Second, we saw the need to have a somewhat larger, more representative group of people providing oversight for the projects and submitting progress reports to each of the towns.

Success will be measured by having the core Council in place and beginning its regularly scheduled meetings in the fall of 2016, by having populated the Council fully by the first quarter of 2017, and by the completion of any governing documents deemed necessary for effective functioning.

The biggest challenge in setting up this kind of group is recruiting the “right” people who will be committed to its goals and have a diverse representation of skills, interests and community constituencies.

2. Community Assets and Needs Assessment (any/all domains)

The goal of this project is to assess on a regular basis the needs and assets of the community, using surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups, as appropriate. The knowledge gained will inform activities and projects that will benefit the community by meeting identified needs and helping the community be aware of its assets.

Success will be measured by the number of interactions that lead to action. The biggest challenge is finding access points and getting people to participate.

3. Communication of relevant information to the community (Outreach- aka Communication and Information)

The goal of this on-going project is to continue the process of communicating information to the community through “hard copy” and digital means. Success will be measured by a growing number of people who request e-mail newsletters, the number of hardcopy bulletins that are taken from selected distribution sites, and feedback received from community members. The greatest challenge is reaching those who are most isolated, either by illness, home location or lack of transportation.

4. Support of Age-Friendly programs provided by other groups and individuals (any/all domains)

There is no lack of programs and activities being sponsored by other organizations in our area. The goal of this project is to provide such support as we can to other organizations. This could take the form of advertising their programs in our newsletters and bulletins, and by offering suggestions and help in preparing age-friendly-focused programs. One such program already begun is offering technical support for use of electronic devices and computers through the Bethel Library and Telstar HS.

Success will be measured by tracking all events and programs that are mentioned and by the number of attendees at programs we help to develop. The challenge here is keeping up with all that is offered!

B. PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED within the next 12 months

1. Development of a prototype transportation system (Transportation, Social and Civic Participation)

The goal of this project is to develop a sustainable, more robust transportation system for our area—the communities of Bethel, Greenwood, Newry and Woodstock, hereafter referred to as the Community.

Specific objectives include

- a. designing, implementing and evaluating a prototype transportation system that embraces the use of a Transportation Coordinator and volunteer drivers. This prototype, to be conducted from November 2016 to October 2017, will focus on providing transportation for the elderly, the disabled and the isolated in the Community.

- b. expanding existing scheduled transportation services currently provided by public transportation services, such as Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS)

We will be partnering with Community Concepts, Western Maine Transportation Services, Maine Adaptive Sports, and Independent Transportation Network-America as we develop the system.

Success will be measured by the number of drivers recruited and subsequently trained, the number of rides provided, and the number of people assisted. The challenges will include long-term sustainability.

2. Universal Access Trail (Public Spaces, Health and Wellness Services)

The overall goal of this project is to encourage all ages and abilities to get outdoors, have an opportunity to exercise more and to appreciate nature. The Mahoosuc Land Trust is the leader in this endeavor, which will be located at their new home - the Valentine Farm Conservation Center.

The specific objective is to build a two-mile handicapped-accessible nature trail on the property. This new trail is relatively level and so it is feasible to make it accessible to all from its inception. Many of MLT properties are difficult, steep and not handicapped-accessible, so this location offers great possibilities for reaching a sometimes-neglected constituency. The time frame is dependent on funding, with plans to construct the trail during the summer of 2017.

As part of the planning, the Valentine Visioning Committee, headed by Jean Bass and Jane Chandler who is also a member of the AFCI, has been visiting other land trusts and community gardens to evaluate the best plan for the new location. A local trail builder and a retired National Parks naturalist have begun designing the trail, and their recommendations have been included in grant applications.

Success will be measured by receiving grants to fund the work, completion of the trail in the time frame provided and tracking community usage. As with any endeavor like this, the first challenge will be obtaining the necessary funding. Subsequent challenges will include proper maintenance and building public awareness.

3. Indoor Winter Exercise Program (Health & Wellness Services, Social Participation)

The goal of this project is to provide Seniors with an opportunity to do gentle exercise in a safe place, focusing on improving mobility, flexibility and strength. Gould Academy, a private school located in Bethel is making one of its gymnasium spaces available at specific times and at no cost to Seniors in the area for this purpose. The Town of Bethel Recreation Program will support the project by providing its insurance umbrella and handling registration. One

member of the AFCL is joining the Recreation Committee to add the voice of Seniors in the community.

The specific objectives for the first year of this project are to offer at least two hour-long periods each week for guided exercise. As people become familiar with the space and become aware of other possible activities, the program will be expanded.

Success will be measured by the number of sessions held, the number of participants involved, and their feedback as to the usefulness of the program. Challenges will come in the form of finding the best times and days for having activities, and in finding people to lead activities. Maintaining a strong relationship with Gould Academy will be important.

4. Street Safety (Transportation, Public Spaces)

The goal of this project is simply to make motorists within the village of Bethel more aware of crosswalks. Bethel has a long main street that gradually goes uphill and also curves slightly, so an inattentive motorist may well not notice a pedestrian ready to cross. To improve visibility, several crosswalk stanchions have been put in place.

Success with this project will be measured by the number of stanchions placed. One of the unexpected challenges was finding that other considerations could work against placement of stanchions in certain locations.

5. Morning Greeting Program (Social Participation, Health and Wellness Services)

The goal of this project is to create a system for Seniors in the area to feel more secure that someone will check on them if they fail to respond to or check in with daily calls. The task force will consider several models, get suggestions from the Oxford County Sheriff's Department, and consider partnering with several churches. After developing a process format, there will be outreach to the community to gather names of people who would like to be called.

Measures of success will include the number of callers and "callees" recruited. Challenges include cooperation from public entities such as the Sheriff's Department, recruitment of volunteer callers, and effective outreach to the most isolated.

6. Resource Directory (All domains)

The goal of this task force is to create a comprehensive directory of services available to seniors in our community. Specific objectives have to do with how the

material will be organized, and creating an on-line version that will eventually reside on an AFCI website.

Measures of success will be the number of "hits" on the site and the number of calls made to libraries and other organizations where people without computers can request information.

Challenges will include identifying the content of the directory and choosing appropriate links, deciding the design and organization of the material, creating and effective system for maintaining and updating the directory, and identifying funding sources.

C. LONG-TERM PROJECTS

1. Heart & Soul Initiative

The goal of this initiative is to build a strong sense of community amongst the residents of the four towns that are participating. The goal for AFCI in this initiative is to support the Heart & Soul initiative by having one of our Council members serve on the H&S team. We will be able to apply our planning and ideas toward the identification and sharing of projects designated by the H&S initiative.

2. Community Center

The interim goal of this project to support the development of a "distributed" community center, making use of various facilities and building more programs, until such time as a physical center can be developed. One way to accomplish this will be to build a database of spaces available for community use, indicating points of contact, hours that they can be used, what equipment/facilities are available on site, what cost is involved and any restrictions as to use. (For example, most churches do not allow alcohol to be served on their premises.)

Success will be measured by completion of the database and its distribution to organizations. The challenge will be finding time and volunteers to gather the data.

During the course of the existence of the Age-friendly Project Team, much progress has been made on many of the action items specified above. That progress will be covered in the concluding section of this report, along with our plans for the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS: WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

As mentioned earlier, there was great enthusiasm for getting right to work once we saw the results of the survey. And, as we have worked on projects, we have realized that an Action Plan is a work-in-progress, one that opens our eyes to other opportunities and challenges. In this section, we describe our progress to date on specific projects and look ahead to future programs.

A. PROGRESS TO DATE

1. Communication

The Communication Committee, chaired by Nancy Davis, includes the following members: Eliza Barnes, Jane Chandler, Kay Larson, Linda McDonough, all on the Project Team; and community members Fran Head, Karen Paul, Lucia Schwarz, and Maryvonne Wheeler.

An “Age Friendly Community” column has appeared weekly in The Bethel Citizen, the weekly local newspaper, since October 2015. Content is varied, designed to address all domains: reminders of community activities, tips for senior living and health and safety, support for caregivers, links to research and useful information, and the like. A compilation of these columns has been published triweekly and disseminated via e-mail list and hard copy in local locations, such as the Bethel Family Health Center and local supermarket.

Press releases relative to various activities, such as the Volunteer Driver Program, have been published in local media. Special Age-Friendly Community Initiative articles about the Bethel area have been published in local and state-wide media. Social media, such as Senior College blogs and Facebook, have been utilized extensively to communicate with the public. To promote special events such as public meetings, flyers and posters have been published and distributed widely within the four-town region.

The Communications Committee chair is serving as a clearing house for age-friendly related questions and new ideas.

2. Transportation Task Force

A Transportation Task Force was formed including volunteers from the Project Team (A. Cressy, J. Chandler, B. Morton, P. Musso) and representatives from service providers Maine Adaptive Sports (B. Schneider), Western Maine Transportation Services (Craig Zurhorst) and Community Concepts (Brad Edwards).

A public meeting to discuss community transportation needs was held in March, 2016, and a survey focusing on transportation was distributed widely throughout the four town-area. A successful grant request for \$3000 was submitted to the Maine Community Foundation to fund the position of Transportation Coordinator, and the municipalities have committed funds for the next fiscal year, for a total of \$1500.

A job description was developed for the Transportation Coordinator and Kay Larson was hired for the position. Community Concepts Incorporated (CCI) has partnered with the AFCI to provide the infrastructure for the region's Volunteer Driver Program. CCI provided training, background checks and insurance coverage for 5 volunteers in September, 2016. These drivers will receive mileage reimbursement, thanks to a grant from the J.T. Gorman Foundation, to transport Seniors 60 and older to medical appointments, and other reasons.

The program began on November 7, 2016. The program will be continuously evaluated and adjusted as needed for a one-year period.

3. Winter Exercise Program

Eliza Barnes, Jackie Cressy, and Judy Whitman from the Project Team have been working on this effort since April, 2016, after being approached by Sarah Tucker, the Recreation Director for Bethel. Gould Academy offered the use of their Bingham Gymnasium for Seniors, 55 and older. Beth McWilliams has been the Gould point-of-contact for this program.

"Walking the Bingham Gym" started the week of November 29, meeting Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 to 2:30pm. Seniors are encouraged to come in and walk at their own pace during the hour. The response has been excellent, with the number of participants increasing each session.

4. Street Safety

Working with the Town Manager, Christine Landes, and the Department of Public Works, headed by Scott Sumner, A Cressy of the Project Team was successful in having crossing stanchions placed at two crosswalks on Bethel's Main St. during the summer of 2016.

5. Morning Greeting Program

This task force was formed in the summer of 2016. Its members include Kay Larson, Brooks Morton and Eliza Barnes from the Project Team, and community members Melody Bonnema, Marilyn Sahlberg and Bengta Sahlberg.

A process for recruiting people to be callers and for identifying those who would like to be called has been developed. A participant application form is being designed. A letter to several local churches and health care providers has been drafted and will be sent out in early 2017. Contacts are being made with the governing bodies and groups within the churches.

6. Resource Directory

The task force for this effort includes Nancy Davis, Project Team member and chair, and community members Eileen Broderick, Valerie Cole (Senior Plus), Michelle Conroy (Bethel Librarian), Emily Ecker, Pat Harris, Jessie Perkins (Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce), Mia Purcell (Community Concepts), and Martha Yules.

Content areas are being researched and formatted, with plans to link the Directory to a future AFCI website. Roll-out of the first phase of the the Directory is projected for early 2017.

7. Support of Age-Friendly programs

There is not a specific task force assigned to this on-going effort. Rather, as opportunities arise, people interested in particular topics have volunteered to attend an impressive array of conferences and workshops. In addition, assistance has been provided in getting new age-friendly communities started.

- Four AFCI members (Al and Jackie Cressy, Nancy Davis, Kay Larson) participated in the TriState Learning Collaborative on Aging summit in Concord, NH, April 2016.
- Al Cressy participated in an age-friendly presentation at the Volunteer Day sponsored by the Maine State Grange, August 2016.
- Al Cressy and Nancy Davis participated in the AARP Maine Network of Age-Friendly Communities Convention, September 2016.
- Al Cressy participated in the AARP National Livability Conference (Funding Panel), Chicago, November 2016.
- Rosabelle Tiff and Jackie Cressy participated in a Health and Safety Workshop sponsored by AARP-Maine and several other organizations in Brunswick, November 2106.
- Al and Jackie Cressy, Nancy Davis and Karen Paul participated in the TSLCA Caregiver Conversations event November, 2016.

B. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

With the issuance of this Action Plan, the work to make the communities in our area places where people can continue to live and thrive in their own homes for as long as they wish has really just begun. We are pleased with our progress so far, and look forward to expanding these programs and adding others that will address the issues raised by the survey.

Our first big challenge will be to recruit the remaining members for the Advisory Council to ensure the sustainability of the of the Age-Friendly Community Initiative. Representatives from each of the four towns have already been designated, as well as two key members from the original Project Team.

Another challenge will be to find even more ways to reach out and engage members of the community. Continued collaboration with well-established organizations with complementary missions will be very important. While carrying out the projects listed in our initial action plan, we must do the research and the visioning required to develop a longer-term plan.