

Bannockburn Neighbors Assisting Neighbors (NAN) –Annual Report 2010

Governance/Meetings: Bannockburn Neighbors Assisting Neighbors has just completed its third year. The Board had 9 (?) meetings during 2010. This year saw the first changes in Board membership. Xan Konoff completed her term and Kate Horowitz resigned from the Board because she moved from Bannockburn. New Board members, Joanne Krecke and Jillaine Smith, were elected. Doris Brody and Adele deMarco, whose one-year terms had expired, were elected to two-year second terms. Continuing members are Helen Pelikan, Miriam Kelty, and Richard Ramsey.

Block Coordinator Meetings: Two meetings were held with BCs this year. At a tea in March there was extended discussion about how emergencies were handled during the big February snows. An outcome was preparation of an emergency preparedness tip sheet. Another was a Newsletter story about neighbors assisting neighbors during the storms.

BCs learned the results of the updated survey of households to help them identify volunteers and those who need assistance. It is of interest that about 30% of respondent households in Bannockburn have a resident over 65, a figure that corresponds to county demographic data. Block Coordinators were given the 2010 Montgomery County Senior Resource Directory. BCs said that training on how to handle frail older persons would be useful. An effort will be made to arrange such training with a physical therapist.

BCs met again on June 19. Blocks without active BCs were identified. BC involvement and activity level is variable. A core of BCs remain active and committed to NAN's goals, but the need to enlarge the group was recognized. BCs got multiple copies of the File of Life, a way to collect vital information in once place, to distribute to their blocks. BCs recommended that information about NAN be included in welcome baskets that are distributed to all newcomers to Bannockburn.

Direct Services: A priority for NAN is to assist seniors who wish to age in place, in Bannockburn, with those tasks or priorities that were identified on the initial survey in 2007, updated in 2009. Bannockburn and virtually all the villages that have conducted surveys identify transportation and social-educational activities/social visiting as their top two or three priorities. Assistance with household chores is next with equipment loans and help with organization, finances, computers and other specific tasks following.

Since requests for assistance are made directly to neighbors, Block Coordinators and through the list-serv, it has been difficult to track number of services performed. We do know that help with transportation is frequently requested and as far as we know, we have been able to fulfill requests. Assistance with household chores includes a variety of helpful activities: actually changing a light bulb, fixing a faucet washer, resetting circuit breakers, etc; being present when commercial help comes to the home to deter taking advantage or over-charging or inappropriate behavior; advice on whether professional help is needed or whether a neighbor or family member can do the job that needs to be done. A variety of equipment has been

loaned ranging from baby car seats, cribs and high chairs to canes, walker and crutches. Most of these transactions take place via the list-serv. Social visiting and activities that foster socialization have been appreciated by Bannockburn seniors. In response to a discussion meeting, we have hosted a wine and cheese, coffee hour and pot luck at the clubhouse. Other activities that took place this year are listed below.

Social/Educational Programs: The NAN Board, in consultation with Bannockburnians, tries to plan at least one program/social activity each month.

During late 2009 and 2010, NAN sponsored:

Fire safety home inspections completed – summer/fall 2009

Wise Elder Orientation – January 10

Senior social – January 19

Senior Forum – March 16

Home safety presentation by Montgomery County police -- April 7

Happy Hour – April 16

Wise Elder presentations – May 2

Potluck Dinner – June 25

Wise Elder Orientation – October 3

Container gardening – October 6

Where did I put my Memory – November 14

Community Meeting: What's Next for NAN – November 30

Wise Elder presentations – December 12

Wise Elders is a different type of program that pairs high school students with Bannockburnians over 80. Students and elders meet for an orientation session, are paired, and the students are trained in interview techniques. The pair meets about 6 times, during which the student interviews the elder. The culmination of the activity is a presentation by the student focusing on what s/he has learned about the elder as a person, his or her life experiences, and how these may inform the student's experiences. The first group presented in May to an audience that included families of the students and the elders and representatives from Whitman High School and Montgomery County Schools along with NAN attendees. Most found it to be a meaningful and enjoyable way to fulfill their service learning requirement experience. A second group of students and elders are working together as the year ends and are planning a December presentation. The experience of the first group was documented in the Bannockburn Newsletter. A modest grant from Montgomery County Regional Senior Services Center helped support initiation of this activity. Walt Whitman High School supported the activity by providing recorders and other equipment and faculty advice and encouragement.

The Bannockburn Pool assessment to support pool renovation imposed a hardship on some older residents and/or they felt that they would not be in the community to reap the benefits of the new pool. The Board sent a letter to the pool board

proposing that some accommodation be made. The pool board acted favorable on the request.

Communication and Outreach: NAN, as an all volunteer, inter-generational “village” model, has continued to participate in Montgomery County Senior Services and Villages groups. About half the time, NAN is asked to present on its experience and to update county villages. NAN officers have attended all quarterly meetings and many meetings on special topics, e.g. training for volunteers, an aging in place symposium and Senior Expo.

A benefit of NAN’s participation in these and similar programs is that we keep current about what is going on regionally and nationally. For example, we learned about the Village to Village Network organized by Beacon Hill Village in Boston and about the products they offer to facilitate management, accounting and records. We participated in a session on “village”/foundation/business partnerships where we learned about how to approach foundations for grants. We commented on the Village Blueprint written by a volunteer and sponsored by the Bethesda Regional Senior Services Center. A board member is on the Montgomery County Commission on Aging and on the planning group for Washington Area Villages Federation. Through participating in the Montgomery County Adult Protective Services Review Board, we learn about local residential facilities and can be a resource should there be a need. Board members continue to consult with other community groups interested in forming ‘villages’ to foster aging in the community, e.g. Glover Park, Deerwood/Gaithersburg, Chevy Chase at Home, Hillmead, Glen Echo Heights and Somerset.

Priorities for 2011: NAN’s priorities for the coming year include:

1. Continue providing services to Bannockburnians, particularly to assist seniors who want to age in place.
2. Recruiting and retaining Block Coordinators so that every block in Bannockburn has at least one contact person.
3. Increase community involvement in planning and conducting social and educational activities.
4. Identifying community priorities for NAN

Miriam Kelty
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