Case Statement

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Updated: February 2011

www.seniorneighbors.org
Senior Neighbors Today

“It is not enough for a great nation to add new years to life. Our objective must also be to add new life to those years.” John F. Kennedy

History
Senior Neighbors Inc. was incorporated in 1972 as a 501(c)(3) independent agency to administer senior centers. In 1973 Senior Neighbors became a United Fund agency and the Kent County Board of Commissioners agreed to be a sponsor. Additional funding was obtained through grants from the Older Americans Act and the Grand Rapids Foundation. Since its founding 39+ years ago, Senior Neighbors has been dedicated to promoting independent living for adults 60 years and older in the Kent County community, providing essential services that help seniors remain independent into their later years. Senior Neighbors has sponsored the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) since 1986.

Our mission
The mission of Senior Neighbors is Enhancing Senior Lives. The agency promotes the well being of older adults by providing services which support appropriate individual self sufficiency, particularly to those with the greatest physical, social and economic needs. We focus heavily on health and wellness in all of our programming. The agency has a strong casework program, helping primarily at-risk seniors deal with their daily challenges.

We operate five Senior Neighbors centers in Kent County with locations in downtown Grand Rapids, Grandville, Lowell, Sparta and Walker. Senior Centers are really wellness centers in disguise where people socialize, laugh, joke, hug and rebuild healthy lifestyles. Centers not only provide a host of healthful activities for seniors including low-cost meals, exercise programs, nutrition education, health screenings, classes, travel opportunities and other activities, but also help reduce the physical and psychological challenges that can result from isolation.

What we do
Senior Neighbors develops innovative programs to address trends and anticipate needs. We match our services to the needs of every senior we serve.

Senior Neighbors serves over 4,000 older adults each year with urgently needed programs and services for at-risk seniors in Kent County. Over 75% of our clients are single women, mostly widows or women living alone. In 2010, 22% of the clients were non-white, compared to a senior minority population in Kent County of 9%. All of our senior centers serve and benefit their local neighbourhood - they essentially are examples of community development, pulling seniors out of isolated situations that often lead to declining health.

We are responsive
Seniors don’t need to go through layers of bureaucracy to access much needed services at Senior Neighbors. Quick response is one of our skills and why we often are the first contact point for senior issues. United Way 211 forwards hundreds of senior concerns directly to us.

We are proactive
Because we are small and nimble, we can develop creative new programming to meet the huge variance of senior needs. PATH is a six-week, self-management class for people 60 and older with a chronic disease such as diabetes, heart problems, arthritis and lung disease. Senior Neighbors is a leader in helping Kent County seniors negotiate the complicated Medicare D prescription program, providing free guidance on the best program for their specific needs.

We are efficient
Our administrative cost is incredibly low, only 14%, so we’re doing a lot with little.

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We offer a wide variety of programs and services with strong return on investment

As adults age, isolation can grab a foothold in their lives. Following retirement, seniors can become less active in the community, lose spouses to death, family becomes spread across the country and neighbors move away, all common factors that can lead to unhealthy isolation for large numbers of seniors. Those who continue to interact with others tend to be healthier, both physically and mentally, than those who become socially isolated. Interactions with friends and family can provide emotional and practical support and enable older persons to remain in the community, their own homes and reduce the likelihood they will need formal health care services. Isolated individuals are less likely to stay active and the most likely to require expensive health care or hospitalization. Senior Neighbors programs and services can provide a lifeline to the large number of lonely and isolated seniors in our community.

The vast majority of older adults desire to remain in their own home as long as possible, as one’s own home represents security and independence. The services provided by Senior Neighbors allow older adults to remain in their home longer. When a living environment is affordable and appropriate, older adults are more likely to remain healthy and independent.

Malnourished older Americans get more infections and diseases, their injuries take longer to heal, surgery on them is riskier, and their hospital stays are longer and more expensive. Nutrition interventions such as our congregate meals program are cost-effective, result in fewer complications, faster recovery, shorter hospital stays, and reduced hospital expenditures. Studies completed by the American Dietetic Association demonstrated that for every dollar spent on nutrition screening/intervention, at least $3.25 is saved.

Senior Center activities
Senior Neighbors Senior Centers located throughout Kent County foster socialization which in turn reduces health issues caused by isolation. A wide variety of classes, outings, enjoyable programs, health screenings and health education, transportation, and a Trip Club are very popular. Center volunteers read to children and work with math classes in local classrooms.

Thanks to four local foundations and the Grand Rapids DDA, we raised nearly $500,000 in restricted funding to renovate and open our new Grand Rapids Senior Neighbors Center at 333 Division Avenue South. The Center has more than doubled senior participation since the March 2009 Grand Opening! In 2010 we served 26% more congregate meals at our senior centers than the previous year, and 2009 was a 13% over the previous year reflecting the increased demand for our innovative senior programs and services.

Case management services
Trained Senior Neighbors social workers focus primarily on issues affecting low-income, at-risk seniors. The goal is to help them remain as independent and free from high-cost supportive residential care as possible. We provide crisis assistance (eviction notices, utility shut-off intervention); city bus and GO! BUS tickets; minor home repairs; low-cost, nutritious noon-time meals are served at our centers; chronic disease self-management workshops; and connect seniors with the most appropriate prescription payment assistance available.
Home maintenance and financial services

Home Maintenance workers help seniors repair and maintain their homes and make disability-related adjustments at low cost. Our Home Financial Services team helps seniors process Michigan property tax refunds, home heating credits, and other financial documents.

Volunteers

In fiscal year 2010, 973 Retired Senior Volunteer Program volunteers provided 208,876 hours of service to 200 local organizations in West Michigan. RSVP volunteers experience the satisfaction that comes from helping others. They are a dynamic bunch of retirees who stay physically active and enjoy each other's company while they serve.

Programs and Services FY 2010 (October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2010)

- Total seniors served: 4,072
- New seniors served: 1,218
- Transportation rides provided to 990 seniors (includes city bus, GO!Bus, RideLink, and Senior Neighbors buses)
- Nutritious meals served at Senior Centers to 970 seniors
- Hours of Outreach and Assistance (case management/problem solving) were provided to 1,785 seniors
- Hours of Home Chore repair/maintenance service provided to 384 seniors
- Seniors received help filing property tax, home heating, and other tax forms resulting in refunds and credits back to seniors
- Seniors received Medicaid/Medicare counseling
- Seniors received health promotion activities
- Cooling fans provided to 100 seniors during the hot summer days
- Seniors received emergency assistance funds
Senior Neighbors is Outcome driven. We focus heavily on accountability in our effort to grow and continually improve. We carefully measure the outcomes that are being achieved in response to annual goals for programs and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness: PATH Workshops</td>
<td>90% of seniors will indicate that they changed behaviors in ways that have helped them manage their chronic conditions more effectively.</td>
<td>100% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter of Balance</td>
<td>80% of participants will indicate, because of this program, they feel more comfortable increasing their activity level because of participation in this program.</td>
<td>89% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>EnhanceFitness</td>
<td>80% of seniors will indicate they have seen improvement in their endurance, balance, flexibility, and strength.</td>
<td>100% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>93% of seniors will indicate that this service helps them maintain or increase their ability to be more independent.</td>
<td>100% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90% of seniors will indicate that this service helped them get to the places they want or need to go.</td>
<td>98% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Services</td>
<td>80% of seniors will remain living in their home.</td>
<td>89% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>87% of seniors with medical service needs will maintain their health by being linked to prescription assistance program, health insurance, medical equipment and supplies, in-home health care, or other medically related services in our community.</td>
<td>95% of seniors achieved this goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Centers</td>
<td>87% of center members report that coming to the center helped them socialize more.</td>
<td>96% of center members achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87% of center members state that the center helped them be a more active person.</td>
<td>92% of center members achieved this goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Chore</td>
<td>85% of seniors state that the Home Chore work helped increase or maintain their ability to remain in their own homes.</td>
<td>91% or seniors achieved this goal</td>
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Our plan for the future

“The best way to predict the future us to create it.” Peter Drucker

Senior Neighbors is addressing the burgeoning growth in Kent County’s senior population as well as the changing needs of our local senior demographic. We are working to ensure that highly effective and efficient current programming and services remain in place and that we continue to grow and evolve with the changing needs of our local senior demographic. Reduced governmental and United Way funding resulting from economic downcycles puts programs and services at risk, making it ever more difficult to meet the increased needs that evolve from variable economic environments and the growing senior population.

On August 18, 2009, the Bureau of Census reported that the average life expectancy of Americans was at an all time high, 78 years. By 2015, one in every 5 Americans will be over the age of 65. And, with medical advances in cardiovascular disease prevention and treatment and smoking cessation among men, the rate of increase in male life expectancy continues to accelerate.

As our local senior population expands, more and increasingly enticing Senior Centers will be needed to promote wellness, to provide opportunities for seniors to maintain their health, and to discharge a variety of necessary services. Successful Senior Centers of the future will be designed to meet the needs of a wide spectrum of seniors at their specific need, interest and sociability requirements, delivered with cultural sensitivity. Senior Centers allow efficient service delivery and senior-appropriate programs that effectively manage aging issues.

We don’t know today what exact programs will be required in Kent County in 2030. However, through careful adherence to research on future senior trends and issues as well as sensitive attention to changing senior needs as they evolve, Senior Neighbors will design and implement innovative new programs and services customized for the exploding numbers of local older adults. We will continue to monitor and address the following issues affecting communities as the population evolves over time:

Health and Wellness
As Kent County residents age, many will be interested in ways they can improve their health. No matter what their age, seniors can benefit from good nutrition and physical activity. Expansion of workshops focused toward chronic disease management of arthritis, hypertension, hearing impairments, and heart disease will be required. Seniors prefer to exercise with their peers. Affordable exercise facilities targeted toward seniors abilities and desires will help seniors remain active and healthy.

The seniors at our centers are experiencing the benefits of one of the hottest trends in senior centers across the country. Wii Bowling provides opportunities for our seniors to participate in a physically challenging activity which will improve their health, encourage them to form relationships with others, and renew their interests in leisure activities they once thoroughly enjoyed.

Problem Solving
Seniors and their families don’t know where to turn when help is needed. Attention must be given to educating the West Michigan community about seniors and their families, helping them quickly connect with needed services and medical care. Senior Neighbors case managers will continue to provide assistance and problem-solving services to older adults, particularly those at-risk. Access to reduced-cost meals, prescription assistance programs and health care services will help seniors manage their out-of-pocket expenses.

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**Housing**

Seniors desire to stay in their current place of residence as they grow older. Aging at home becomes more difficult for many in traditional houses because of maintenance demands and costs. Helping seniors remain in their homes will continue to be a primary focus of Senior Neighbors. Expansion of services in our Home Chore program, providing increased accessibility to a larger number of older adults, will help more seniors remain in their own homes longer, reducing the need for nursing home services as long as possible. As the population ages, increased focus on helping seniors function effectively in their homes within their disability limitations will be needed.

**Decreasing isolation**

Research indicates that those who are isolated are institutionalized at greater rates than those who have regular contact with people. Expanded senior center programming will provide programs and services that people find enjoyable, helpful and appropriate, drawing more people out of isolated circumstances. Challenging and pertinent classes to stimulate mind and body will be customized to various senior age groups. Programs targeted toward widows and widowers, the group most often isolated, will address issues resulting from isolation. Meals and culturally appropriate foods are a key motivator for socialization. Nutritious, delicious meals in an attractive, welcoming and culturally sensitive environment will be available at convenient times at senior centers. A self-funded, expanded Trip Club will support active seniors eager for educational and cultural opportunities.

**Security**

Security is a basic human need. Seniors need to feel secure in their neighborhood setting, free from crime and safe in their home. Our Home Chore Program helps seniors keep their homes safe and secure. Expanded low-cost tax and legal services will provide emotional security to more seniors.

**Mobility/transportation**

Loss of mobility produces frustration and makes it difficult for seniors to take care of basic needs. The demand for low-cost transportation throughout the county will increase with the aging demographic. Efficiently operated cost-effective transportation for seniors will help them get to essential errands and medical appointments, perhaps far from their home.

**Civic engagement**

Many seniors want to give back to the community through volunteer work. Meaningful volunteer opportunities encourage people to focus less on themselves and more toward helping others. Expanded volunteer programs and opportunities will be sensitively supported by professional staff, providing appropriate recognition programs to support positive healthy community engagement.
How you can help

Your donation serves as a strong foundation for our existing programs and supports the development of innovative new programming to meet the changing needs of Kent County’s burgeoning senior population.

Many of our traditional funding sources are reducing their support because of tough financial times. We are facing significant cuts from nearly all of our traditional governmental funders. We are taking proactive steps on many fronts to operate wisely and efficiently. Following a cost/benefit analysis of our programs and services, we revised the employee benefits package, eliminated staff raises again this year, reduced staffing at our senior centers, cut case management staff, and reduced or eliminated other programs.

We step up when family and friends are unable to assist or live far away. Many of our seniors do not have family or friends nearby and rely heavily on Senior Neighbors to meet their emergency and often daily needs. We are organized to respond quickly when we hear of the need.

Many of us know older adults and those of us blessed with older family members quickly learn the challenges facing many older adults. Senior Neighbors is ready to serve.

An expanded and well-funded Senior Neighbors, Inc. will reach more seniors in an increasingly effective manner. We receive financial support from a variety of sources but our funding does not come close to covering the cost of the programs and services we offer. We ask clients to donate toward the services they receive, but many of our most at-risk seniors are unable to do so and the donations we receive do not cover the full cost of the service. The entire community, seniors and the people who care about seniors, will benefit from your financial investment.

Your unrestricted gift makes essential programs and services like these possible...

- $100 gift provides 40 nutritious meals at our senior centers
- $250 gift provides 65 senior rides to essential appointments by public transportation
- $450 gift allows a Home Chore worker to replace a rotted exterior door in an old house with a new steel door and dead bolt, bringing security and peace of mind to an at-risk senior
- $750 gift maintains one Senior Neighbors bus for one month, providing needed mobility and independence where affordable public transportation isn’t available
- $1,000 provides home financial assistance such as filing for home heating credit refunds for 50 seniors
- $5,000 gift keeps one senior center open for a month, fostering socialization which reduces isolation, offering low-cost on-site meals and a variety of classes, outings, enjoyable programs, income tax assistance, Trip Club, exercise, and health screenings.

Please lend your support, both financial and volunteer time, to partner with Senior Neighbors as we move forward into the future. We appreciate your investment in our efforts and will continue to strive to enhance the lives of seniors, and indirectly their loved ones.

Your donation ensures that Senior Neighbors is here for all of us, now and into the future.

Thank you.
Senior Neighbors is funded in part by: Individual donations; Heart of West Michigan United Way; Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan; Senior Meals Program; Kent County Senior Millage; Townships of Sparta, Tyrone, Algoma, Lowell, and Vergennes; Villages of Sparta and Kent City; Cities of Lowell and Grandville; Michigan Dept. of Transportation; Office of Services to the Aging; Corp. for National and Community Service; Emergency Food and Shelter Program; Older Americans Act.

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