**AARP Summary Report & Lessons Learned**

**Greendale’s Livable Community Initiative 2017 – 2022**

The Village of Greendale, Wisconsin is part of the metro Milwaukee area with a population of approximately 14,100 and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2012. Greendale’s demographics reported in the AARP Action Plan stated that 23.3% of Greendale’s population was 65 and older -- a much higher percentage of older adults than Milwaukee County or the State of Wisconsin. The leading causes of death in the Village are heart disease, cancer, and dementia.

Every five years the Greendale Health Department is required to perform a community health assessment and collect and analyze the data. This data is then used to identify trends and emerging needs in Greendale. As a result of the 2016 community survey, ***successful aging*** was one of the top three priorities that residents identified as an emerging concern to address over the next several years.

Early on the SAGE workgroup, which stands for ***Successful Aging in Greendale for Everyone,*** held five listening sessions beginning in 2017 to hear from community members about what they believed were the major strengths and concerns that should be addressed through the AARP Livable Communities initiative. From this collective feedback, the 2017 – 2022 AARP Action Plan began to come into focus. And subsequently, a presentation to the Village Trustees announced our acceptance to the AARP Livable Communities initiative.

The SAGE workgroup, made up of dedicated individuals and community organizations with both a passion and work experience with older adults, has been meeting monthly ever since. SAGE developed a logo, vision and mission statement along with a value statement. These foundational statements helped to ground the group in its purpose going forward. The vision and mission statement continue to be a part of our focus as they are on the top of every agenda. Over time SAGE has had changes in its membership and new members have been invited to join. New or prospective members met with the committee facilitator to bring them up to speed on the workings of the committee. While we experienced some early-on bumps in the road, the committee has developed into the “*little engine that could*”.

One lesson learned was that it was challenging to attract and keep youth members as well as members of diverse communities. While we worked hard to have a more diverse committee, we were not always successful. We did have a Hispanic professional on the workgroup temporarily, but ultimately her employment didn’t allow the time away. We also had two students on the committee to get their perspective, but further education pursuits understandably interfered. With our efforts with The Alzheimer’s Association “Community Convenings” meetings and a health equity workgroup, we anticipate that this may open the door to additional diverse community members which the workgroup would welcome.

Another lesson learned is that the workgroup is very adaptable. During the pandemic committee members learned how to use ZOOM and continued to meet monthly via a virtual format for about two years. This occurred with both the Outreach and the Dementia Friendly subcommittees also.

About this same time, a rack card (brochure) was developed and later updated and shared at various outreach events. And over time, we’ve developed a strong presence on social media. A lesson learned is that it takes time to develop a presence and it’s helpful to have younger individuals tackle social media outreach efforts.

Community partnerships have always been the bedrock of SAGE and, while the committee membership has evolved, this framework has been one of SAGE’s truest strengths. Here is a small sample of some of the diverse partners SAGE has worked with over the years: Girl Scout Troop 1035, the Greendale Robotics team, the Greendale Fire and Police Departments, the Department of Public Works, as well as the library and local businesses. The Alzheimers Association, a local senior living facility, Love Thy Neighbor, ERAS, Shorewood Connects, Community Alliance, a local restaurant, and a tinker lab where activities focused on intergenerational bonding activities.

Another key take-away that became apparent early on was that while resources for older adults (and others) already existed in our community, many residents were not aware of them. So rather than duplicate existing services and/or resources, SAGE determined that their role should be to share this resource information with Greendale residents. To accomplish this SAGE held in-person and virtual trainings on a variety of topics and resources. SAGE also developed a SAGE Page that was included as an educational insert in the Village Views -- a bi-monthly newsletter that is mailed out to all Greendale households.

During the past several years we’ve had a full-page, back-to back insert on topics, which included transportation, support groups, things to do during the pandemic, scams, palliative care, advanced directives and end of life issues, talking to your doctor, medication management, exercise, brain health and more. Unfortunately, the cost of the insert in the Village Views was prohibitive. And, while we have copy ready on a variety of topics, including the role of therapy in healthy aging, different types of therapy, health literacy and strategies to better communicate with health care providers, we have not included an insert in the last several months due to budget constraints. The Outreach group is revisiting alternative ways to get this information out to our residents.

In addition, the Outreach subcommittee, recently held a very successful health fair with 30+ vendors and five screeners to include blood pressure, balance, memory, hearing screenings, and Covid vaccines. We had approximately 90 attendees and the evaluations were very positive. We are planning to hold a similar event in 2023 at the same location.

In 2016, the Dementia Subcommittee submitted an application to the WI Alzheimer’s Association and Greendale became the first Wisconsin community to be certified as a Dementia-Friendly Community. In 2019 Greendale was accepted into the Dementia Friendly America network. Three Dementia Friends programs were offered by a SAGE member at various community settings.

After completing a training, Greendale also became a certified Music and Memory community and partnered with a local adult memory care facility, the Department on Aging and high school students as part of this project.

The committee coordinated the Memory Café, for those with early-onset dementia and their caregivers. Gatherings with unique interactive programs were held monthly except during the 2021 pandemic. They have partnered with the WI Alzheimers Association, Ferch’s Café, the Milwaukee Public Museum, and the Wehr Nature Center among others.

In addition, in May of 2019, the subcommittee offered “Understanding Dementia: A 3-Part Educational Series for Family Caregivers” and had 35 attendees. They also presented to the Greendale Chamber of Commerce on how to become a dementia-friendly business. The committee held a community event that featured a well-known neurologist who presented updates about receiving a dementia diagnosis, treatment strategies and lifestyle changes with a focus on the MIND diet. More than 100 people attended this pre-pandemic educational session!

Memory screenings were offered by the Dementia-Care Specialist with Milwaukee County who is also a member of SAGE. These events were promoted in the Village Views and were well attended. The Greendale Library also purchased a wide variety of reading materials on dementia that are at varying reading levels and available for check out. The committee also prepared and distributed a Greendale Dementia Resource Guide.

A Dementia-Friendly-newsletter was written by a committee member that continues to go out bi-monthly to over 70 residents and others and includes information about research studies specific to isolation and other issues, local resources and more.

A lesson learned is that the Greendale community has a strong interest in learning more about dementia, resources, free and easy access to memory screenings, support groups and more.

Early on we heard older adults in Greendale say they wanted to age in place and stay in their homes for as long as possible. What they said can be summarized in one word and that is **independence**! That has been a guiding principle for SAGE and will continue be our guiding star going forward during the next five-year cycle.