

AGING IN COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the April 9, 2024, Meeting
9:30 am to 11:30 am

“Volunteer and Employment Opportunities for Older Adults”

Call to order: Meeting called to order at 9:30AM

Commissioners In Attendance: Wayne Berman (co-chair), Betsy Carrier (co-Chair), Laurie Pross, Mary Sweeney, Mona Grieser, David Engel, Linda Bergofsky, Barbara Selter, Joyce Dubow, Norman Goldstein

Staff: Pazit Aviv, MoCo

Guests: Sarah Fought, (JCA, Jewish Council for the Aging); Jodie Rasch, JCA; Cathy Nestoriak, JCA; Cassandra Smith, Montgomery County Volunteer Center

OPENNING REMARKS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS: Wayne and Betsy welcomed everyone and introduced today’s meeting and the featured presenters. Volunteering and pursuing second careers after retirement are excellent ways for older adults to stay active, engaged, and fulfilled in their post-retirement years. This meeting focuses on the opportunities that older adults have in Montgomery County to volunteer and/or avail themselves of employment. This panel described various workforce and volunteer programs that can help older adults find employment and volunteer opportunities and how some challenges can be addressed through tailored support programs, flexible opportunities, and efforts to combat ageism and promote inclusivity in both volunteering and employment sectors. The featured speakers addressed this topic from several perspectives. Speakers included:

- Jodie Rasch (she/her)
Director, The Career Gateway and CareerTech Programs
and Virtual 50+ Employment Expos
Jewish Council for the Aging
- Cathy Nestoriak (she/her)
Director, Employment Services
Jewish Council for the Aging
- Cassandra Smith
Outreach Manager
AmeriCorps Seniors Program Manager
Montgomery County Volunteer Center

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: The minutes for the March 12th, AIC meeting was reviewed and approved.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS:

Jodie Rasch spoke first about JCA’s Career Gateway Program and Career Tech Programs. These programs have helped older adults hone their resume, polish their networking and interviewing skills, use Internet job search resources more effectively, and turn their age and experience to their advantage. The programs are made up of both in-person and virtual courses, run by volunteers. Each session of the Career Gateway features 30 hours of small-group classroom instruction over five days, comprehensive take-home materials, practical

exercises, and a long-term mentor. The age range for those attending the courses have been from 50 to 85 years old with most being in the 60's to early 70's.

The course also includes:

- An overview of today's job market, with particular attention to challenges facing experienced workers
- Ways to handle gaps in your work experience and address age or compensation issues.
- Easy-to-use forms for planning and managing your job-search campaign.
- Techniques for sustaining job-search momentum in the face of rejection.
- Techniques for answering interview questions.
- Pointers for selecting and giving reference names to potential employers.
- Writing effective cover letters, follow-up letters, thank-you notes, and other materials
- Tips for responding to job advertisements.
- Techniques for contacting recruiters.
- Pointers for negotiation of job offers and choosing among multiple offers.

The JCA has also had great success conducting these sessions as an interactive, Zoom, online experience. The format for future sessions may continue to be offered virtually or may be offered in person. The virtual sessions offer the same curriculum, class facilitator, presenters, and volunteers addressing all the important job-seeking skills as in our in-class programming. Prior online sessions have been a resounding success.

Cathy Nestoriak spoke about the JCA Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) that provides on-the-job training for people with low income who are age 55 and older and live in Montgomery and Frederick counties, Maryland. Trainees receive minimum wage while working at nonprofits and government agencies to build their skills and resumes while delivering valuable community service. SCSEP is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor grant and in cooperation with The Center for Workforce Inclusion (CWI). This funding provides 90% of the support for SCSEP with CWI providing a 10% match or \$5 million. Enrollment priority is given to veterans and qualified spouses of veterans, then to individuals who are over 65, have a disability, have low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, reside in a rural area, are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have low employment prospects, or have failed to find employment after using services through the American Job Center system.

The SCSEP Program is an equal opportunity program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Eligibility

- Jobseekers, ages 55 and older
- Meet established low-income guidelines.
- Desire an opportunity for employment and training

Program Benefits

- On-the-job training with local non-profit or government agency
- Training, skill building, and professional connections
- Stipend of at least hourly minimum wage
- At least 20 hours per week commitment
- Income eligibility exemption for Federal housing programs and SNAP benefits

Sandy Smith, Outreach Manager & Host of Make a Difference spoke about volunteering opportunities in Montgomery County for older adults. The County operates the Volunteer Center (MCVC) that promotes and expand meaningful community service in Montgomery County by recruiting, supporting, and connecting volunteers and non-profits. Highlights of the Volunteer Center include that it was started in 1970s as part of

Montgomery County's Department of Family Resources. In 1993 Maryland became the first state to implement a service-learning graduation requirement. In early 2000s a MCVC volunteer created a system to transition paper files to a computer-based database. As of 2023 MCVC remains the only dedicated Volunteer Center in the state of Maryland.

There are many benefits of older adults getting involved as volunteers, including maintaining social, physical, mental engagement, and learning new skills. There are many types of organizations that older adults can get involved in as volunteers including non-profit partners and government agencies. There are a range of volunteer activities including: working on special community events, one-time opportunities, and ongoing commitments.

The Volunteer Center has a range of resources, including "Make a Difference" which is a County cable show that highlights volunteerism, a free monthly newsletter, Montgomery Serves which is in person consultation, 50+ volunteer network which is a searchable database, and AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a federally funded volunteer program for people over 55 and its partners volunteers with specific agencies. In addition, The Neal Potter Award is an annual volunteer award program honoring people over 65 for a lifetime of service.

Following the three presentations, there was lots of questions and discussion between the AIC members in attendance and the three presenters. The meeting ran late.

BUSINESS MEETING: As time was limited, a short business meeting followed at which these items were discussed:

- Pazit gave a brief update of County and Village activities, that also included an update on legislation.
- Wayne talked briefly about the need to plan for future topic areas of interest for the AIC and preparing for upcoming CoA budget priorities.

UPCOMING MEETING: Our next meeting is planned for Tuesday, May 14, 2024. We will be discussing the upcoming Public Forum and begin identifying upcoming budget priorities. We will also begin to identify priority topics for the AIC to take on beginning in September 2024.

MEETING ADJOURNED: Motion was made and seconded to adjourn meeting at 11:35 am