

# **Participant Feedback from the Thirteenth McKee Learning Lunch**

## **Chattanooga's Engagement in Eldercare**

**March 27, 2017**

This learning experience is co-sponsored by the Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability, the UTC School of Nursing, and the McKee Chair of Excellence in Learning, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

### **Introduction**

The Chattanooga area is anticipating a significant rise in the number of people age 65 and older who will call this region home. By way of illustration, the population of the elderly who reside in Tennessee is estimated to increase by an astounding 91.1% from 2013 to 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau, UTK Center for Economic & Business Research, SETDD Calculations). The resulting population upsurge is an exciting and welcomed prospect, although it also poses a need for additional eldercare services and housing, which in turn will generate vital questions for community leaders.

This McKee Learning Lunch explored issues, concerns, and opportunities related to eldercare services and housing in the Chattanooga region. The session began with an inspiring presentation by Everlena Holmes, a community advocate in Chattanooga. Then, in accordance with the process used at every McKee Learning Lunch, there were three general feedback opportunities, or Assignments 1, 2, and 3. The participants, who are listed at the end of this report, have provided their insights and questions about the topic. Those responses and insights are presented below.

### **Assignment 1**

**Post-presentation Questions. Following the discussion, participants posed questions about Chattanooga's engagement in eldercare.**

**The questions are listed below.**

#### **Significance and Impact of Issue**

- What do we, in Chattanooga, mean by eldercare?
- At what age are individuals considered to be senior citizens?
- Why is there sometimes a negative attitude toward elders?
- Where will the eldercare initiatives focus its efforts?
- What is the goal of the Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability with regard to senior citizens?

#### **Aging in Place and Quality of Life**

- How are the most pressing needs of seniors in Chattanooga being met?
- How can healthcare providers collaborate to make senior resources available for Chattanooga's elderly?
- How do we maximize the quality of life for an aging population?

- What is the most important step our region can take to improve, enhance, and expand the quality of life for the aging segment of our population?
- Is there one need or service—above all others—that seniors report would make the most difference aging in place?
- How can we educate elected officials about the increasing demand for senior services and advocate for more funding and support?

### **Knowledge of Resources**

- What eldercare services exist in Chattanooga?
- What services are missing in our region for our senior population?
- How do we let seniors know about the resources available to them?
- Is there a central clearinghouse for eldercare issues and services?
- Is there a central hub for local resources where I can send patients and families?
- How do we connect eldercare to all the other kinds of care?

### **Specific Services**

- What services are available for senior citizens who are physically and mentally healthy and want to be of service to the community, such as helping with political campaigns, tutoring, and providing other people with help with housework and yardwork?
- What options are available to seniors in Chattanooga as far as social events and activities?
- Are there affordable non-traditional, housing options (congregate housing) in Chattanooga?
- Do doctors make home-calls to the most vulnerable and if so, for whom?

### **Chattanooga Efforts**

- What is Chattanooga doing to engage their older population?
- Is Chattanooga responding to the growing older adult community?
- Can a group that meets regularly to address eldercare issues (including state and local officials)? What is Chattanooga's engagement with eldercare? How do we measure up in this area as compared to other cities?

## **Assignment 2**

**Discussion Question: After the presentation, participants, in groups of four, discussed three assigned questions. Questions and responses are listed below.**

### **Question 1. What do we need to develop in order to support seniors as valuable citizens?**

- Quality health and dental care, access to the Internet and training in technology, access to transportation, occupational therapy, inter-generational connection, evaluation of homes and other buildings in order to help seniors age in place.
- Physical and monetary resources, coordinated care, easy access to healthcare (including mental health), house calls for medical care, transportation.
- Leisure and recreational programs, transportation, housing, health (case-manager for multidisciplinary care), interactive neighborhoods that are more socially connected, technology training.

- Home health (putting preventive measures in place to reduce hospitalization rates, better post-hospital care, and better caregivers, 360 evaluations), provider education, financial education.
- Transportation options (AARP, voluntary taxi service), awareness of ageism, complete access to youth and family centers. Also, inter-generational communication to support symbiotic relationships in which younger individuals teach technology and older individuals give advice.

**Question 2. What barriers do our senior citizens face regarding their [ability to lead] purposeful, successful lives?**

- Fixed-income issues (choice between medicine and food), length of time [between] bus and home (cannot buy frozen foods), disparity between decreasing funding and growing needs for senior population, and access to high-speed internet.
- Isolation, transportation, fiscal resources, lack of funded programs, and ageist attitude (not as mindful of—even apathetic to—their needs).
- Transportation, upkeep of homes, and acknowledgment of seniors when developing programs.
- Affordable housing, coordinated transportation, walkable areas, and lack of geriatric expertise.
- Fear of being scammed and taken advantage of, transportation, isolation, lack of financial resiliency.
- Fear about getting out of the house, fear about safety, transportation for shopping, a lack of understanding of systems and processes.

**Question 3. How can we help our elderly residents to age in place?**

- Home-design and home-safety assessments, transportation, senior-health coaches for training programs, nutrition, exercise plans, “silver sneakers.”
- The move for electronic medical systems, including addressing hacking issues and preventions.
- Senior-citizen barrier of financial and physical abuse. Many seniors do not think they have any other option but to be victims. Some fear leaving their homes and going into nursing-homes.
- Long-term-care program. Long-term-care ombudsman:  
<https://www.tn.gov/aging/topic/long-term-care-ombudsman>.
- Assisted living, assistive animals, a committed community to serve older adults.
- Bring services to home: health and food services, home repairs, engagement with youth, matching needs with services, history projects.
- Long-term care, senior-friendly designs for hotels, restaurants, and so forth. Providing better education.
- AARP taxi options. Learning exchange [use elders as scholars], bring awareness of fraud, home modifications, elder- and handicapped-housing designs, financial support, cognitive training.
- Encourage socialization, the PACE program mindset (committed community), the Denmark/Holland model (establishing intergenerational connections), become educated earlier instead of waiting until it becomes a personal issue.

### Assignment 3

**Post-discussion Question: After the discussion, we asked participants to respond, in writing, to two additional questions. The questions and responses are listed below.**

#### **Question 1. What is the most important thing you learned today?**

##### **Current Engagements**

- Elders have needs in our community that aren't being addressed or met. Fortunately, there are people who care.
- There are many programs, activities, and services in our area designed to support the aging population and to help them enjoy a better quality of life.
- A core group of people seems committed to making improvements for seniors.
- Other key shareholders in the Chattanooga area work with older adults.
- A diverse group is interested in the care of the older adult.

##### **Need for Greater Support**

- We need to prepare to meet the growing needs of a growing senior population.
- Chattanooga has much to do to make Chattanooga an "age-friendly city."
- The elder adult population in this southeastern region has grown by 60 percent, and the southeast district processes important aging demographic information.
- We are all aging together and have the same concerns.
- We have to take better care of seniors, which requires us to be more educated.

##### **Complexity of Issue**

- This is a difficult multidimensional issue.
- The complexity of issues affecting the life and health of senior citizens.

##### **Prospective Measures**

- Establish a council on seniors.
- Use taxi services from AARP.
- Adopt Canada's home visits.
- Involve neighborhoods and organize communities.
- Integrate the elder population into the broader culture.

#### **Question 2. What unanswered question(s) are you leaving with?**

##### **Holistic Care**

- How can we begin developing a practical, holistic level of care for older adults?
- How can professional collaboration take place? How can professionals use their expertise to promote aging in place—the idea of a holistic level of care?
- How can we create an organized network, which will lead to identification of services for the elderly and collaboration across agencies and organizations?
- What supports are there for Alzheimer's patients in the community?
- How do we incorporate social workers into the primary-care setting?

### **Education**

- How do we inform elders about the resources available to them now?
- How do we get the information to the family caregivers?
- How can we all become better educated on this subject?

### **Transportation/Home Living**

- In what ways can we improve transportation for the elderly, especially those on a fixed or low income?
- How can we develop new living arrangements for older adults?
- How do we provide preventative social services to those who are between Medicaid and privately wealthy, like help with transportation and household chores?

### **Collaboration**

- How do I help my community of seniors?
- How can University of Tennessee students and programs become more engaged with Chattanooga neighborhoods and seniors?
- How do we work together to tackle some of these issues?
- What is the goal of this collaboration?
- What will be done to make Chattanooga an age-friendly city?
- Will the Dutch/Danish model of having college students live with elders work in Chattanooga?

### **Next Steps**

- What is the best way to start?
- How will all of these elder seniors be paid for?

## Participants

**We would like to thank the following participants for their interest in and contribution to this McKee Learning Lunch.**

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**Bengt Carlson.** Coordinator, Experiential Learning, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

**Daniel Keith Cartwright.** County Executive, Sequatchie County.

**Colleen Combs.** Director, Marketing and Business Development,, Alexian Brothers Community Services.

**Howard Cotter.** Former Mayor, Red Bank, Tennessee. **[Did he attend?]**

**Brittany Cusack.** College of Health, Education, and Professional Studies, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Vicky B. Gregg Endowed Chair of Gerontology.

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**Criss Grant.** Director, Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability.

**Zibin Guo.** Professor of Anthropology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

**Lisa C. Harrison.** Director of Clinical Education and Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

**Lori Hoeger.** Director, Corporate and Social Responsibility, Morning Pointe Senior Living/IHP, Executive Director, Morning Pointe Foundation.

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