

CAFE: The Center for Age-Friendly Excellence

Advancing Livable Communities for all Generations



CAFE Focus Group Report Daly City April 2019 Older Adults

Transportation

The main transportation barrier issue for this group is the cost of transportation. They report very few options for seniors. They do report using Uber and Redi-Wheels which is somewhat different compared to other senior focus groups; particularly the use of Uber. Perhaps it is the proximity to San Francisco where there is more availability and the cost is not too prohibitive.

The problems with Redi-Wheels are significant. Service either does not exist or it is very poor; drivers are routinely late and take riders to the wrong destination and cannot then take them to the right destination; riders are delivered to time sensitive medical appointments very late; riders are routinely abandoned. The group asked about who is maintaining quality control?

Uber and Lyft represent different concerns: focus group members are fearful of using the service and drivers are not educated or sensitive about the needs of older riders. Uber drivers seem to be the most problematic, “like robots” and there seems to be a lot of talk of help but no real action to help with transportation issues and needs.

There seems to be some perceived or real competition between Doelger and Lincoln Senior Centers. This focus group was of the opinion that Doelger receives more funds, while at the same time they report that funds and services and programs have been reduced over time to both centers.

Housing

One housing story concerned a 67-year old woman who has lived in Daly City since 1986. Her rent is now \$2,200 for a small one-bedroom apartment. Her rent continues to go up, but her income is fixed. She cannot find an affordable place to live in Daly City so she is moving to American Canyon in Napa County.

She has submitted 10 applications to senior housing in Daly City and is number 700 and number 132 on two of the waitlists. She shared that she is depressed and fearful about her life now. Her friends are all in Daly City and her mother is placed in a nursing home in Daly City. She will lose this community soon.

The focus group reported that they know of elders living in garages with only a sofa and no heat. A HART team bought a heater for one woman. She wonders about others who cannot have such help.

HIP housing has a very long waiting list and they cannot find help. The City office for housing does not return calls. They wonder who and when they will have affordable housing?

Social Participation

Focus group members were pleased with the number of senior centers and variety of activities. A main barrier is transportation to the centers and activities. Some of the programs lack participation and one wonders if transportation is the main reason why.

At Lincoln, a main activity is bingo; there are mixed feelings about bingo. Some enjoy it and some do not. They appreciate the socializing and tiny winnings, but wish for more. In many cases, the welcome of the activity depends on the ethnic group. Different groups seek and enjoy different activities and if there is not a good match between the wishes of the group and the activities, there is frustration.

Focus group members say they miss the field trips; the trips were cancelled because of a lack of funds and transportation. In addition, in the past, Doelger Senior Center provided transport to and from the Center; that has ended too. At the same time, it is the opinion of focus group members that Doelger is well funded. Focus group members say they now go to senior centers in other cities to find the programs and services they want.

Respect and Social Inclusion

This focus group spoke of the situation of homebound seniors, and loneliness and isolation. They shared that even persons living at the home of family members find themselves alone amid the busy lives of family. These seniors feel ignored. They wonder what may be done to reach out to seniors who are not integrated into the larger community of peers. Focus group members shared stories of being left alone all day while family members go to school and work. The group knew of no senior center programs directed at isolated seniors.

The group shared that the Peninsula Peer Counselors are a “godsend” and “angels” as elders have someone to talk with. This group reported that many seniors are sad and lonely. They say the number one issue is isolation and even seniors in assisted living and skilled nursing homes are isolated and lonely.

They highlighted Peninsula Family Services and HART, who conduct home visits. Volunteers conduct friendly visits, but the volunteers change over time. The group recommended paid workers to conduct the friendly visits so there would be consistency and relationships could be built over time. The other challenge is culture and learned behaviors. The group believes that Filipino and Chinese cultures are very conservative and people don't share or tell others about their personal problems.

This concern is particularly acute among seniors in the LGBT-Q community. They are afraid to self-identify; they fear the stigma and avoid available programs and services. Through Peninsula Family Services, there is a building, staff and programs for LGBT-Q seniors...but few participants because of fear.

Civic Participation & Employment

The focus group believes that volunteers should be paid, perhaps a stipend. Volunteering provides "good feelings" and is a positive. They recommend that transportation or funds for transportation be provided to senior volunteers. They shared that some people volunteer in order to receive the free food available at their sites.

At least one focus group member watched a City Council meeting on television.

Communication and Information

For the first time, a focus group reported the plague of telephone scams directed at seniors. At least one focus group participant had been the victim of a scam.

They continued the reporting of the digital divide and the major problems encountered by older persons who do not know how to use computers and smart phones. They are not only being left behind, they cannot function in a society where almost every life function is connected to something on line or connected to artificial intelligence.

Members of this group literally go the office at Lincoln Center to get information. Printed activities lists are no longer mailed, and this is a significant loss.

There is an Xfinity Channel 27 that is community access, and that is helpful. The Chinese community relies on local Chinese language newspapers.

It is difficult to imagine, but this group reported that the computers at the Lincoln Center do not work and one cannot get online via these computers. "...they are just for show..." Focus group members go to the Library to use the computers, but one has to wait a long time for access and one only gets an hour of use. On the other hand, the War Memorial Senior Center has a large computer room that is often underused.

It was the sense of the group that they need computers and access at Lincoln Center. The group reported bad staff attitudes, including the administrator, and little concern with the needs of seniors.

Community & Health Services

Focus group members were satisfied with the health education services provided by Lincoln Center. They liked the visiting nurse and appreciate the blood pressure checks, health and wellness topics and health insurance information.

A major unmet need is dental care. The focus group members shared that they cannot afford dental care, and that it is impossible to get an appointment if you are part of the Medicare Health Plan of San Mateo.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

The group was of the opinion that infrastructure conditions are not bad, at least satisfactory. They think Westlake did a good job with street crossing technology. The flashing lights are very good, but they are not sure what flashing lights actually mean? Stop, then go, slow?

On the other hand, sidewalks are broken on Frankfurt Street and they don't know whom to contact for repairs. Members of the group were fearful of the many pit bull and large aggressive dogs and think they should have a muzzle. In addition, dog feces is everywhere. Many walkways are not clean.

The group members were worried about athletic shoes thrown across PG&E power lines.

Judging from just this one focus group, a relatively easy fix and large impact intervention would be to fix the computers at the Lincoln Center. And get the search engines working so the computers will allow online access. Small stipends (gas cards) for center volunteers would be a major help and public relations coup. It appears that senior and staff relations are strained. A responsible office above this center level needs to look into the matter. Another easy fix would be to offer classes on how to use the computers and classes (ongoing) on how to use smart phones.