

Initiative UPDATE

IN THIS ISSUE

AI Survey update from Jon Burkhardt of WESTAT...page 1

Focus on Yonkers, New York and Asset Based Community Development...page 2

Communications tools and methods directly from the AI communities...pages 4-5

Introduction to Orange County, Florida...page 8

The *AdvantAge Initiative*

The *AdvantAge Initiative* is a community-building effort focused on creating vibrant and elder-friendly, or "AdvantAged," communities that are prepared to meet the needs and nurture the aspirations of older adults.

Is your community "AdvantAged"?

- Does it help older residents maintain their health, live independently, and lead productive and satisfying lives?
- Does it engage older adults as resources, tapping their civic and social strengths?
- Is it able to meet the changing needs of the frail, disabled and homebound?
- Do older residents consider it an elder-friendly environment?
- Is planning for a growing older population a priority in your community? Does it have reliable data to inform planning?

CONTRIBUTORS

- Mia Oberlink
- Esther Zuckerman

Center for Home Care Policy and Research – VNSNY

- Jane Clay
- Bridget Edwards
- Phil Stafford

Evergreen Institute on Elder Environments

We have had a busy couple of months getting the *AdvantAge Initiative* (AI) survey underway in the nine AI communities. In this issue, Jon Burkhardt, Senior Study Director at WESTAT, provides an update about the progress of the survey and explains the role that WESTAT has played in the process of data collection. Some interesting preliminary demographics reflecting the nine communities combined are also included. This certainly whets our appetite for more!

In this issue, we also shine the spotlight on Yonkers, New York. Cathy Elser and Mary Hotte, our Yonkers AI liaisons, have been focusing on activities related to the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model. They recently held a well attended, day-long ABCD conference, which brought together representatives from many different types of organizations. An interview with Robert Francis, keynote speaker at the Yonkers conference, provides insight into using the ABCD model for further community outreach and development.

We have dedicated our centerfold to the wonderful communications ideas that our liaisons have used to promote the AI survey in their communities. Included are visuals of some of their outreach efforts. Bravo to everyone for your hard work! It has really paid off.

We are also pleased to announce that we have received funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies foundation to conduct the AI survey on a national level. In the next few months, a random sampling of Americans in at least four regions of the country will be contacted by phone to take part in the AI survey. The national survey results will give us a look at the status of older people across the nation, and provide us with points of comparison for the individual community survey results.

And finally, we would like to welcome our tenth community to the *AdvantAge Initiative*. The Virginia G. Piper Trust will be the lead agency as our project expands to its seventh state and includes Maricopa County, Arizona. We look forward to working with Carol Kratz and her colleagues at the Piper Trust. Welcome aboard.

Mia and Esther

AdvantAge Initiative Interviewing Under Way

by Jon Burkhardt

A key part of the *AdvantAge Initiative* (AI) is assessing the "elder-friendliness" of communities. One of the most powerful ways of making this assessment is by asking older persons who actually reside in these communities what life is like for them.

The Center for Home Care Policy and Research of VNSNY contracted with WESTAT of Rockville, Maryland to conduct telephone interviews with older persons in each of the communities participating in the *AdvantAge Initiative*. In addition, a national survey is now being planned.

WESTAT is a large statistics and survey research corporation that has been involved in many studies designed to improve living conditions for older persons. For VNSNY, WESTAT helped to design the survey instrument, has drawn the sample of persons to be interviewed, and is now conducting telephone interviews with older persons in nine AI communities. In the near future, WESTAT will expand the survey to one more community, initiate the national survey, document the survey methodology, and deliver the data files to VNSNY.

Two key initial steps in survey research are deciding whom to interview and what to ask them. For the *AdvantAge Initiative* study, persons 65 and older who live within the boundaries of the *AdvantAge Initiative* communities are being interviewed. Persons to be interviewed have been randomly selected from a master data file, maintained by the US Department of Health and Human Services, of Medicare recipients. Because nearly all persons 65 and older are eligible for Medicare, the list of Medicare recipients comes closer than any other database available to being a complete listing of persons 65 and older in the US.

In the AI survey, persons 85 and older are being sampled at an increased rate to ensure that we will

“You’ve got to ac-cen-ctu-ate the positive. . . .
latch on to the affirmative. . . .”

(Johnny Mercer/Harold Arlen, 1944)

The Yonkers Elder-Friendly Initiative (YEFI) has adopted a positive approach to community improvement that recognizes and builds on the community’s strengths. This Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model is a strategy concerned with “what is (already) present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, and the associational and institutional base of the area – not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs.”¹

With generous support from JP Morgan Chase bank, YEFI’s Mary Hotte and Cathy Elser brought together over 140 executives, managers, and administrators from public, private, and not-for-profit organizations for a conference last November entitled, *Asset-Based Thinking: Mining Community Resources*. The purpose of the conference was to introduce members of the community to ABCD concepts, begin to recognize and raise awareness about community assets, and provide a tool to help community members find resources in each of Yonkers’ 38 neighborhoods.

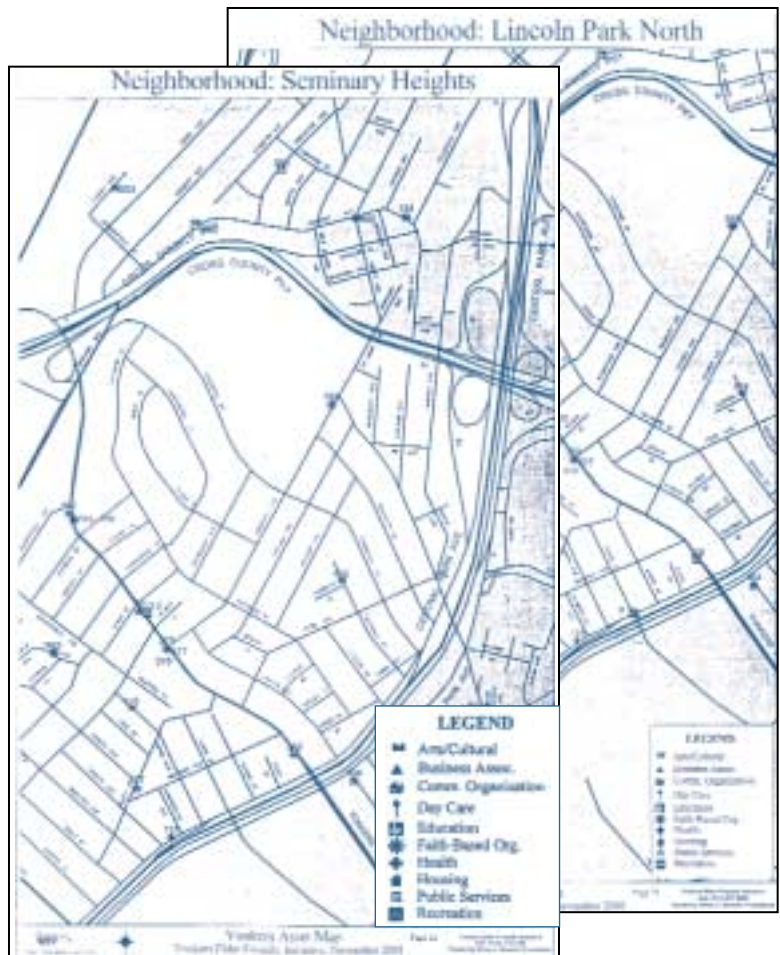
Robert Francis, a faculty member of the ABCD Institute at Northwestern University, was invited to be the conference keynote speaker. The conference agenda included Mr. Francis’s presentation about building community through mobilizing assets (for more on this topic, see the interview with Robert Francis on page 3), exercises to help define personal assets, and a panel discussion with community-based leaders who have used the ABCD model to create changes in their own communities.

With the help of Ann Louise Lyman from the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and the Westchester County Geographic Information System, which makes maps for the entire county, a resource book containing maps of each of the Yonkers neighborhoods was created. Each neighborhood map identifies resources, such as churches, hospitals, day care centers, arts and cultural facilities, and other programs and organizations available in that locale. Three hundred copies of the resource book were printed and distributed primarily to conference attendees, but other community-based agencies and government offices also received copies. Plans are under consideration to update the book using high school and

college students and local seniors in an intergenerational effort, and to make the book available on the internet (see sample pages below).

Cataloging institutions is only the beginning. The strengths, talents, and experiences of individuals in the community must also be recognized and tapped. For more about identifying and utilizing the assets of community residents see *The Gifts of Individuals*, by Phil Stafford, and the *Head, Heart, Hand, and Home* exercise on page 6.

continued on page 3



¹Kretzmann, J. and McKnight, J. (1993) *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications, p.9.

FOCUS ON YONKERS:

A Conversation with Robert Francis



Note: Back in November, YEFI introduced Yonkers' first Community Asset Map, a massive compendium

that identifies over 600 associational assets in each of the city's 38 neighborhoods. The list of people and organizations involved in producing the Asset Map reads like the veritable who's who in the service community. More importantly, perhaps, the roster reflects the broad range of involvement beyond the "usual suspects" we see in many community-based projects. How terrific it is that veterans, high schoolers, child care advocates and RSVP volunteers combined their efforts to reflect upon the assets of the community and produce such a valuable document.

Robert Francis, a faculty member of the Chicago-based Asset Based Community Development Institute, shared his expertise with the Yonkers folks that November day. In this interview, Robert elaborates on themes and directions that Yonkers and other AI communities can explore as they look to create elder-friendly communities.

AI: For eleven years, you have been providing leadership in the Bridgeport, CT area to draw attention to the strengths of young people. How did you come to have this orientation?

Robert Francis: Well, I didn't start out with that orientation. The organization I started with was called the Regional Youth/Adult Substance Abuse Project, Inc. This tells you something about how we portrayed the work -- as a focus on the **problems** of substance abuse. But we noticed after a time that the kids who fared worst in the system were those who happened to be stuck with labels. Kids with problem behaviors who could avoid being labeled seemed to be able to escape from delinquency if given the right supports or "protective factors" as they were called. In the early nineties, after reading McKnight and Kretzmann, I realized we were all simply talking about **assets**, about ways that communities can identify and build on the strengths of individuals and associations.

AI: So you began working in a new way?

Robert Francis: Yes, and now you know why our agency is simply called RYASAP. In 1992 we invited Jody Kretzmann to Bridgeport in order to introduce these ideas to the community. Jody has returned several times and now many citizens have been trained in the approach. Indeed, we have 23 community councils focusing on neighborhood issues from this asset-based perspective. I also began incorporating an "assets" approach into youth grants and found receptive readers.

AI: Has this made a difference in the community?

Robert Francis: Without a doubt. Back in 1992 Bridgeport had a terrible reputation, with a very high crime rate and a "deficit-

based" approach to problem solving that was going nowhere. By a happy coincidence our new mayor and new police chief bought completely into the idea of sharing our city's strengths, not weaknesses, with the outside world. To make a long story short, there has been a virtual sea change in the image and in the quality of our city. Asset-based planning is now a principle that cuts across many agencies, including the United Way and Community Foundation.

AI: You helped Yonkers create its first Community Asset Map.

Robert Francis: Yonkers is off to a good start. Their asset map is an "association" map, focusing on the services provided in neighborhoods by a host of large and small organizations. It's a great tool. The next step for Yonkers would be to engage those neighborhoods once again in a survey to create maps of **individual** assets. In Bridgeport we train "mappers", who are grass roots members of the community, to turn out in force to meet and talk with citizens about their individual talents and skills. I should add that this is much more than a survey. The mappers often respond directly to ideas and needs that are identified by individuals, and individuals often move into volunteering with no prompting. This process allows us to derive **categories** of talent represented in the various neighborhoods so we can come back later to tap this resource to benefit the neighborhood.

AI: How does this approach relate to the idea of working with seniors?

Robert Francis: I think seniors are often marginalized as children. Kids have enthusiasm without experience. Seniors have skills but, too often, no outlet for them. What an elder-friendly community it would be that figures out how to tap both of these rich resources! In Bridgeport, the loss of arts funding, for example, allowed us to turn to seniors with significant artistic skills to work in local schools. The Elfin Society (GE retirees and employees) created an inventory of assets and now routinely plugs volunteers into needed projects. I don't favor isolating seniors too much, which is why a neighborhood focus, including seniors, would be a good way to go.

AI: Is asset mapping alone enough to get things going?

Robert Francis: Well, people do enjoy the process, but it would be tragic to conduct asset mapping and then do nothing with it. People are already surveyed enough and cynical about follow up. Hence, you must think through the entire process from mapping to action before ever starting out. Good asset mapping is a pretty dynamic process and some people want to see action right away, of course. Asset mapping is not research. It's **community building** at its core and the **relationship building and mobilization** part is as important as the mapping!

Robert Francis is Executive Director of RYASAP, 2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605

continued on page 6

Communi

Attention!

Our community has been chosen to participate in a Nationwide Survey

Share your views about Staying Put in your neighborhood

Your neighborhood has been chosen to participate in a nationwide survey that will help determine the changing needs of our country's older population. WE NEED YOUR VOICE TO BE HEARD!

The Staying Put Initiative, sponsored by Mather LifeWay and the Staying Put Community, is working to make your community — and others across the country — better places to live for older adults and people of all ages.

What you should know about the Staying Put Initiative...

- Residents of the Northwest side of Chicago were specially selected to survey participants.
- 800 residents will be contacted.
- You may receive (or already have received) a letter from Mather regarding one of the survey and their support for the initiative.

If contacted...

- You will be called at home and surveyed over the telephone.
- The survey will take about 45 minutes and is completely confidential. Please participate!

If you have questions about the Staying Put Initiative... contact Mather LifeWay at 1-800-400-2188.



Mather LifeWay
Serving the needs of the aging population
through innovative solutions and services.

Chicago, Illinois:

- Placemats for Mather Café Plus
- Postcard mailing
- Posters placed in strategic locations in the community
- Outreach to Aldermans' offices

Puyallup, Washington:

- Press release, 2 stories and op ed piece in local papers
- Story published in interfaith coalition newspaper
- PowerPoint presentations by task force members
- Posters placed in strategic locations

NEWS & NOTE

Puyallup Faces National Test As "Elder-Friendly" Cor



ADVANTAGE

What is the Puyallup AdvantAge Initiative?

The AdvantAge Initiative

Improving Community An Aging So

Yonkers Elder-Friendly

Pueda que le llame...

Es muy importante, entonces por favor...

Hable con nosotros!



Si usted recibió una carta por correo, probablemente le llamaremos para que participe de una encuesta que haremos por teléfono para todas las envejecientes de la ciudad de Yonkers. La encuesta es completamente **confidencial**, la encuesta que toma aproximadamente **30 minutos** sera hecha entre los meses de Enero, Febrero y Marzo. Esta encuesta nos ayudara a tener una mejor perspectiva y saber con exactitud cuales son las necesidades de las personas envejecientes y así poder suplirlas. Esto nos ayudara a **Mejorar la calidad de vida y tener una mejor ciudad para personas de todas las edades.**

Westat, una prestigiosa compañía de encuestas, estara conduciendo esta encuesta. La encuesta es **legítima**. Esta encuesta no es para vender, pedir, hacerle preguntas personales acerca de su estado financiero, su número de Seguro Social o proponerle nada.

La encuesta esta siendo patrocinada por: la Oficina Concejal de Planeamiento de Yonkers, El Centro Medico de San Jose, La Oficina del Alcalde John Spencer, La Oficina Para Los Envejecientes de Yonkers, El Hospital St. John's y La Oficina de Parques y Recreaciones de Yonkers, al dorso la participacion de Yonkers Elder Friendly Initiative

Encuestas similares estan tomando lugar en diferentes partes de la nacion como parte de una campaña nacional. Una de ellas es **AdvantAge Initiative, patrocinado por La Oficina de Enfermeras Visitantes de Nueva York**. Estas encuestas estan siendo conducidas en 10 ciudades en la nacion empezando de Jacksonville, Indianapolis hasta La Ciudad de Nueva York.

No cuelgue al futuro de Yonkers, Hable con nosotros!

Preguntas? Por favor llame al: 914-375-3388

Si por alguna razon usted piensa que alguien esta tratando de usar la encuesta para hacer fraude o para engañarle por favor llame al Departamento de Policia.

Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, NYC

- Monthly mailing
- Flyer distributed to buildings' residents
- Special calendar inserts requesting phone numbers
- Face to face (during lunch hours, recreational settings, etc)

Yonkers, New York:

- [NY Times](#) article
- Media advisory
- Local newspaper articles

- Flyers to libraries, banks, supermarkets, etc

"Seniors, Can We Talk?"

Be a part of nationwide survey. Help your community to become more 'elder-friendly'

The residents of our Senior Program, the Lincoln-Square Senior Center, are being surveyed in a very important survey project. The survey is being sponsored by five local and national organizations around the country. The name of this project is called the AdvantAge Initiative, which is part of a national effort to create vibrant and older-friendly AdvantAge communities across the country.

How does it work?

Beginning in October, you may receive a letter advising you of a telephone survey that will be conducted in Manhattan (Lincoln Square Senior Center) and other two-to-five organizations around the country. The name of this project is called the AdvantAge Initiative, which is part of a national effort to create vibrant and older-friendly AdvantAge communities across the country.

When they call, please don't hang up! They will ask you a series of questions about your community, what you like, how you think it could improve and how you can help. Your responses will be used to help improve your community. Your responses will remain completely confidential.

Lincoln Center area (50th - 72nd Street) Why this community?

• It's Your Community, Your Voice Matters

Your input is the important feedback you necessarily needs to make your community, livable, and friendly place for all older adults. Only YOU can help us improve what it is really like living here. Only YOU can help us improve what we need to change.

Yonkers Values Your Opinion

Identifying a Neighborhood's Assets

The Gifts of Individuals

By Phil Stafford

If Yonkers moves ahead with individual asset mapping, as Robert Francis suggests, it will likely yield many insights into neighborhood-based talents and skills -- the retired bookkeeper looking to help a non-profit, the disabled adult who likes talking on the telephone to the homebound, the former teacher who helps kids with homework after school, etc. These are valuable, concrete skills. There are also less tangible forms of contributing to the neighborhood that are easily overlooked but no less worthy of recognition.

Recently, in preparation for a local visioning workshop, I spent some time wandering the streets and alleys of the neighborhood that was to be the focus of my talk. Leaving my car in a church parking lot, I ventured up the adjoining gravel alley to introduce myself to an older woman in trench coat and babushka, who was lingering near the hedge. Reaching her, I realized that she was keeping a close eye on a fluffy cat nosing through the leaves under the brush. She was, I realized, walking her cat. Who walks a cat, I wondered? Only someone with special sensitivities and lots of time, it seemed to me.

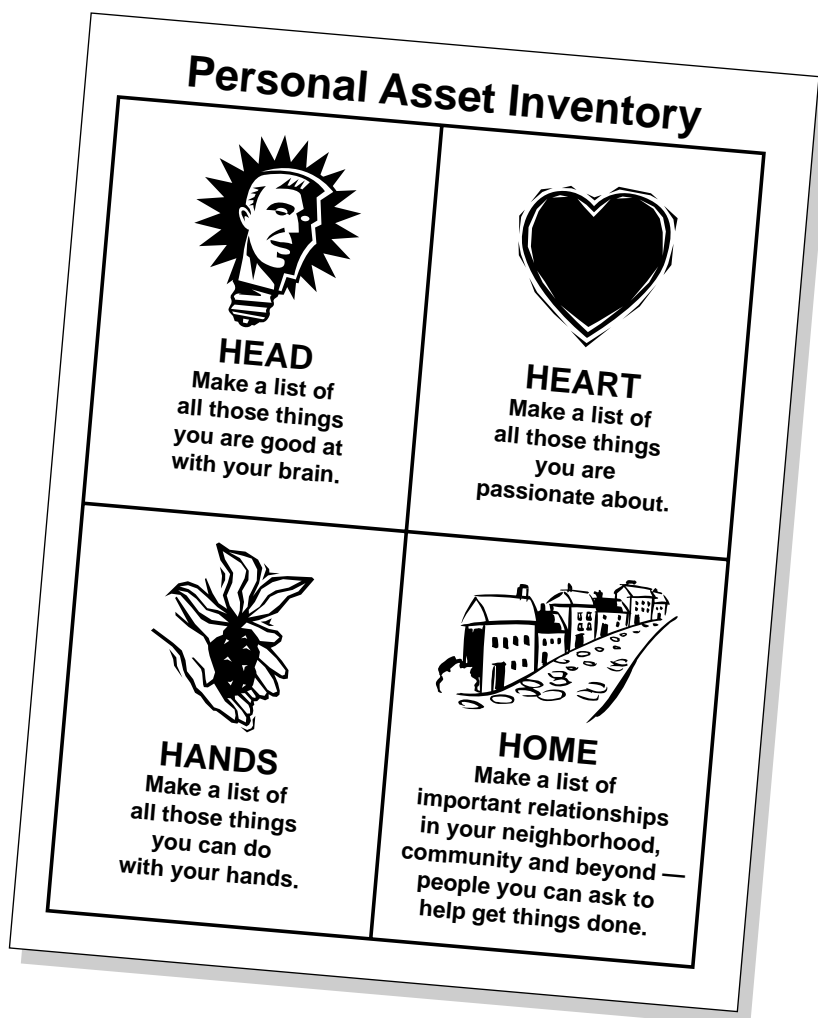
After introducing herself as "Helen" and noticing my camera, she asked if I was with the newspaper. No, I explained, I was just exploring these great alleys and would love to take her picture. She responded to my request with an emphatic "no" and, when I asked if I could take the kitty's picture, she added that she didn't think he would approve either.

Helen explained that the cat was her neighbor's, who had little time to pay attention to it and, hence, the cat spent the day with her, an arrangement that suited Helen, the neighbor, and the cat perfectly. "I'm too old and could die anytime, so it wouldn't be wise to keep a cat of my own", she explained. Daily, however, Helen and the kitty enjoyed a leisurely and curious stroll through the alleys, each time terminating at "his sister's" house where, it seems, the cat also just happened to have a girlfriend.

Later, at the workshop, participants informed me that I had just met a beloved member of the small community. Helen, they told me, is much appreciated for her ability to nurture and protect the valuable relationships between people and animals in the neighborhood. Now that's a good neighborhood in which to grow old! -- a neighborhood that recognizes and

appreciates the individual gifts that people like Helen have to offer, no matter how trivial they may appear at first glance.

Whether it's by informal observation or through formal asset mapping events, the goal of identifying the individual assets in a neighborhood is an important one to pursue. For a good example of an individual asset inventory instrument, see Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications, 13ff. Or, for a simple and fun exercise to use in your next task force meeting (and then with community groups), try the HEAD-HEART-HANDS-HOME exercise (an exercise I learned and adapted from Dan Duncan of the Central Indiana United Way).



Who Are the AdvantAge Initiative Survey Respondents? *

The AdvantAge Initiative (AI) communities are different from each other, and we expect that the survey results may vary significantly from community to community. But with results from nine communities all combined, and with the caveat that these preliminary results will certainly change somewhat when all the interviews have been completed, we have found that of all survey respondents so far:

- Half are 75 years or older
- Six out of ten are female
- Half are married
- Nine out of ten are white
- Three-quarters own their own homes and most have paid off their mortgages
- Over one-third live alone
- More than two-thirds have lived in their communities for twenty years or longer
- Nine out of ten want to stay in their homes for as long as possible
- More than half rate their health as excellent or very good
- Two-thirds are very satisfied with their lives
- One out of seven work full or part time
- One-quarter are volunteers

* The above averages are approximate and are based on a total of 1,353 telephone interviews completed by WESTAT in the nine AI communities in February, 2002. These averages do not necessarily reflect the results of any one community and are subject to change as more interviews are completed.

Interviewing Underway (continued from page 1)

interview enough respondents in this age bracket to obtain meaningful statistics about their conditions. In terms of content, the questionnaire has 107 questions common to all the *AdvantAge Initiative* communities, plus several additional questions that focus on conditions within each specific locality. Respondents are asked questions about demographic characteristics, housing and neighborhood conditions, health and welfare, personal and community support networks (including transportation), activities of daily living, caregiving, personal activities, financial independence, and personal problems. The interviews generally take about 30 minutes to complete.

Getting older persons to respond to the survey has been more difficult than expected. Even though all survey participants were contacted by mail two or three times before the initial telephone contact, many older persons are now more reluctant than ever before to speak to strangers on the phone. Several factors may account for this, including well-documented cases of fraud specifically targeted to older people, plus some very effective anti-fraud campaigns, plus general uneasiness due to terrorism and other uncertainties. To assist in addressing these concerns, some of the AI communities have generated letters of support for the survey effort from key local authorities, and these letters have helped increase response rates for the survey.

The objective of the survey effort is to obtain about 600 completed interviews per community. Interviewing began during the second week of January and is scheduled to end about mid April. (Interviews in new communities and the national sample will extend the interviewing time beyond April.) By the middle of February, 1,353 interviews were completed and entered into the data file. This set of interviews provides the basis for the overall demographic profile in the sidebar (See *Who Are the AI Survey Respondents?*). At the time of this writing, we are well past the mid-point in our data collection efforts.

We should note that the results from the *AdvantAge Initiative* communities were never intended to represent all older persons in the United States or even any specific subset of communities. Still, most of the preliminary statistics are well within the ranges reported by other community studies.

We'll all be looking forward to the excitement of having the final survey results and putting them to use in creating more elder-friendly communities.

Introducing the AdvantAge Initiative Communities

Orange County, Florida (Orlando area):

AdvantAge Initiative Lead Organization: Winter Park Health Foundation (WPHF)

AI Liaisons:

Paulette Geller: (407) 629-1761; pgeller@wphf.org

Cathy Lieblich: (407) 629-1509; clieblich@wphf.org

Orange County is the sixth most populous metropolitan county in Florida. During the next fifteen years, the population of adults age 65+ will grow at a rate that is twice that of the general Orange County population. People 85 years old and above will grow at nearly three times the general population growth rate. Orange County's population is predominately white (87.34%), though the Latino and African American populations are increasing steadily.

In July 2000, Orange County established an Interim Commission on Aging to recommend strategies to improve the overall quality of life of older adults living there. One of the interim commission's ten major recommendations was to track indicators of health and well-being to determine how well the community is meeting the needs of its older residents.

During this same time, the Winter Park Health Foundation (the lead AI organization) was defining its goals and objectives for

improving the quality of life of older adults. However, there was no baseline data for Orange County. WPHF staff then learned about the *AdvantAge Initiative* and realized this survey would provide the baseline data that was needed. The foundation board then decided to fund Orange County's participation in this initiative.

Orange County was selected by the John A. Hartford Foundation, one of two sites nationwide, to replicate a strategic planning and implementation process known as the Delta Project. The mission of this project is to help design a new future for aging services. The plan involves the development of new and innovative service systems, and the creation of new funding sources for these services. The Delta Leadership Council includes representatives from Orange County government, Heart of Florida United Way, University of Central Florida, the local chamber of commerce, and others.

The *AdvantAge Initiative* task force was convened by the WPHF and includes representatives from the Delta Leadership Council, the Senior Resource Alliance, the Orange County Commission on Aging and representatives of Orange County government offices. Efforts are underway to expand the task force.

About Us

Established in 1993, the Center for Home Care Policy and Research-VNSNY works to advance knowledge that will promote the delivery of high quality, cost-effective care in the home and community, and support informed decision-making by policy makers, providers, and consumers.

The
ADVANTAGESM
Initiative

Improving Communities for an Aging Society

AdvantAge Initiative Funders

Support for the *AdvantAge Initiative* has been generously provided by:

- Archstone Foundation
- The Atlantic Philanthropies
- Helen Andrus Benedict Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Retirement Research Foundation
- Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation

Center for Home Care Policy and Research
Visiting Nurse Service of New York
107 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021
212.794.6300
www.advantageinitiative.org