



A Community for All Ages

## Age-Friendly Sarasota Newsletter

Thursday, November 30, 2017

### Sarasota County Rose to the Occasion with the Nation's First-Ever Age-Friendly Festival



Well, we all did it! Sarasota County rose to the occasion with the nation's first-ever Age-Friendly Festival. It was a total community effort involving YOU!, businesses, governments, nonprofits, and the media. National and state-wide leaders and organizations were also a big part of it. Our "Community for All Ages" was on full display at the Sarasota Fairgrounds on Saturday, October 28th and it was impressive.

Exhibits and experiences were welcoming, interactive, and fun. Kids of all ages became engaged with a range of activities -- from petting llamas to practicing Tai Chi, to learning about universal design, living assists, and caregiver support.

Health and well-being may have been at the forefront, but the entertainment and fun was ever-present. Education sessions featured national and local experts covering a variety of topics including community innovations, life navigation, housing and transportation options, and so much more. Throughout the midway and exhibition halls, age-friendly came to life.

#### REFLECTING ON AN AGE-FRIENDLY SARASOTA

At the Age-Friendly Festival, attendees were invited to share their thoughts about what makes a community Age-Friendly. Reflection Lounges were available throughout the Age-Friendly Festival. The lounges were designed to provide a place where participants could relax in comfortable furniture and engage in conversation. Guides in each lounge posed questions and facilitated discussions about what makes a community Age-Friendly, responses were immediately posted. Here are just a few topics and comments:



The Festival was truly a dynamic focal point and historical marker for our local age-friendly movement. It created a unique connection between hundreds of exhibitors, advancers, educators, entertainers, volunteers, and more than 4,000 attendees. It displayed and amplified to our community the broad scope of what being age-friendly is all about: how the quality of life and ability to age optimally are affected by our social and built environments and community resources, and how we as individuals have significant control and responsibility of our aging success. But most importantly, it showed how the multi-sectors coming together in common purpose could produce fantastic synergy and accomplishment.

So where does Age-Friendly Sarasota go from here? With a foundation built on our community's assets and aspirations, its development continues to evolve in a myriad of ways.

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## "You can't help getting older, but you don't have to get old." - George Burns

In this 20-minute video, Dr. Bill Thomas, the ambassador of Elderhood, reminds us that we are all elders in the making.

Get ready to be inspired ... "aging is good." :-)



Elderhood Rising: The dawn of a new world age

**Affordable Housing** is needed, and not only for older adults, but #ForAllAges. Suggestions included "tiny home communities," cooperatives, and the rejuvenation of old motels as artist's spaces. Others felt more low-income housing "like the Jefferson Center" and housing for people "who don't have resources" was needed. It was noted that Universal Design could be far more 'universal' in our community.



**Transportation** - The "sooner we get to autonomous vehicles the better." "More education on roundabouts is needed" (and indeed, an interactive roundabout educational experience was provided by Sarasota County Government at the Festival). Other aspirations included reducing the age for free local bus rides, low-cost bus passes, expanding

bus services east of I-75, north to southbound shuttles and trolley services, and increased availability of valet services.





## From Aging the Possibilities to Reinvention Convention: A Journey Continues



Reinvention Convention

On November 9, 2017, more than 150 people gathered for the [Reinvention Convention: Reimagining Perceptions of Aging](#), the first collaboration between [Age-Friendly Sarasota](#), [Friendship Centers](#), [JFCS of the Suncoast](#) Seniors, and [Ringling College Lifelong Learning Academy](#), which shed a vibrant light on the perils of ageism.

Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation (TPF) opened the candid discussion with highlights about the local age-friendly movement: The journey of community engagement on creating our future through the lens of life-long living.

Sarasota became the first age-friendly community in Florida in 2015, but efforts for the movement began years before in 2006 with Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence (SCOPE). SCOPE hosted a community engagement process called Aging the Possibilities where participants focused on possibilities instead of problems and held five Winter Forums with sold-out audiences on issues related to healthy aging and longevity opportunities.

Through this process, the Independent Transportation Network - [ITNSunCoast](#) was incubated by the [Community Foundation of Sarasota County](#), and the [Jewish Family & Children's Service of the Suncoast](#) is now a stand-alone 501(c)(3). Also, The Institute for the Ages was conceived to use Sarasota as the

**Health and Well-being and Work & Play** topics resulted in shared aspirations for more affordable age-friendly exercise programs, better biking and walking trails, wider sidewalks to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters, and exchanges for medical equipment. Also, intergenerational possibilities were shared: "increased interaction between the youth and elderly," "buying an older relative a tablet and teaching them how to use it," educating younger adults on how to "prepare for their aging parents," "how to engage/connect with people of other ages," and "increasing intergenerational collaboration and opportunities."



Sarasota is an age-friendly community, and looking forward, the more we learn, share, and experience, the more we engage with family, friends, and neighbors, the closer we'll move toward a community that will benefit generations to come.

- Linda Albert, The

(3) TPF; this initiative was conceived to assist Sarasota as the living laboratory for market research and while not sustainable, did present a national Positive Aging Conference.

In 2009, as TPF's work began, TPF selected Aging with Dignity as one of its nine legacy initiatives. Again, TPF collaborated with SCOPE who engaged Kathy Black, a USF Sarasota-Manatee aging expert to conduct a participatory research study. After publishing the findings in many academic journals and presenting at conferences, Kathy learned about the World Health Organization's (WHO) global network and spoke, on her own, with county commissioners to propel this work forward. From there, TPF felt like there was an opportunity to support a community engagement movement.



In 2015, Age-Friendly Sarasota worked with 1,200 survey participants and 8 focus groups-including people from every zip code and every decade older than 50 years of age, to become the first age-friendly community in Florida to join WHO's Age-Friendly Network.

Since 2015, with the leadership of Kathy Black, Age-Friendly Sarasota created an [Action Plan](#) for 2017-2020. In 2017, [The Patterson Foundation](#) gifted the community with the largest [Age-Friendly Festival](#) in the world and first in our nation.

The Phoenix rose from the ashes of the Winter Forums and Positive Aging Conference as The Reinvention Convention, which inspired attendees with nationally recognized speakers: Barbara Shipley, Senior Vice President, AARP; Dr. Bill Thomas, physician, author and entrepreneur, Eden Alternative; and Liz Redford, Implicit Bias Research Project. AFS is proud to partner with the Reinvention Convention and to create an age-friendly future together.

[Carol Kranitz](#)'s blog highlights ways the Reinvention Convention worked to shatter ageism: [The Category Is Aging and the Answers????](#)



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