

Proposed Active Aging Center for Buncombe County

Background

Currently, one in five individuals in Buncombe County are over the age of 65, by 2025 it will be one in four. Buncombe County is one of the fastest growing older adult populations in the state. North Carolina ranks as the 9th state in the nation that has the oldest population.

A recent study has reported that social isolation may impact an older adult's health the same as smoking fourteen cigarettes a day. This statistic highlights the importance and need for an Active Aging Center. The goal would be to serve all of Buncombe County through this centralized location. Currently COA receives more than 16,000 calls a year from clients seeking services and support.

Executive Summary

The proposed Active Aging Center (AAC) would address Adult Day Health, Care Management, the social determinants of health including food insecurity, transportation issues, social isolation, and access to activities for health and wellness. The development of this center would address many of the issues that older residents in Buncombe County face. In many counties across the state and the country there is one central building for older adults to seek assistance. Buncombe County has created a similar concept for individuals experiencing abuse and sexual assault with the Family Justice Center. This idea of a "one-stop shop" has a lot of support from the aging services providers in the county. This concept has been discussed for years throughout Buncombe County yet there has not been an agency that has taken the steps to lead the initiative.

In 2018, the Mission Hospital Community Investment staff came to the Aging Coordinating Consortium meeting and facilitated three different discussions about streamlining and coordinating aging services throughout the county. They receive numerous applications from aging services providers and noticed there seemed to be duplication and confusion.

Following that meeting the Council on Aging (COA) Board decided to take the first steps toward facilitating a conversation about developing a centralized location and service system.

MountainCare and Buncombe County have joined COA in exploring the feasibility of developing the Active Aging Center for Buncombe County. As one of the partners MountainCare has been serving the needs of seniors in Western North Carolina for more than 30 years. Through Adult Care and other programs and services they have been assisting thousands of families with the challenge of caring for an aging or cognitively impaired adult.

These community discussions have evolved into the concept of the proposed Active Aging Center. The WNC Bridge Foundation has provided the funding to further explore the development of the business planning for the Active Aging Center.

IBIS Enterprises has been engaged to develop a comprehensive business plan to determine the feasibility of developing an Active Aging Center as a community partnership project. The three vision partners working with the IBIS team include: Council on Aging, MountainCare and the Buncombe County Department of Social Services.

The business planning process includes a market assessment, programs and services, size and scope of facility, concept block plans, site selection, ownership and operations,

marketing and education, financials, including capital and operating budgets, funding sources and a project development schedule.

Some of the programs and services to be offered may include: Heart healthy café, adult day health, childcare center, intergenerational programs, senior center including health & wellness activities, fitness amenities, adult learning, technology hub, health and nutrition, commercial kitchen, congregate dining site, time-share space for counseling services, legal, financial and insurance services, Mountain Mobility, UNCA -OLLI, Meals on Wheels, primary care healthcare providers and other community services; MANNA food pantry and community conference space. The vision for the AAC would be a one-stop, accessible, convenient location with a consumer-focused, welcoming environment for older adults, their families and caregivers.