



# Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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The Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services conducts activities to improve services for California's elderly through research, education & collaboration. These activities are made possible through the generous support of the Kleiner Family Foundation and

## Issue Highlights...

- *Compendium of Community Aging Initiatives*
- University of California Villages Project
- Local Government Adoption of Aging-Friendly Policies and Programs
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## Center Releases *Compendium of Community Aging Initiatives*

In March, the Center released a *Compendium of Community Aging Initiatives*, which for the first time documents the various efforts across the country to help communities become more “aging friendly.” Included in the *Compendium* are 121 initiatives, representing respondents to surveys sent to nearly 300 organizations identified through online searches. The *Compendium* includes a brief description of each initiative, including geographic areas served, lead agency, and accomplishments to date.

Center staff also are preparing a journal article examining variations among the initiatives included in the survey. In addition to documenting the range of aging-friendly community initiatives across the United States, the article will develop a conceptually- and empirically-based classification system, reflecting variations in goals, methods of community change, and accomplishments. This categorization represents the first attempt in the literature to develop a systematic approach to studying the varied efforts on the part of national organizations, nonprofits, and governments to make their communities more aging friendly.

The idea for this *Compendium* was developed at a meeting of leaders of community aging initiatives at the ASA/NCOA “Aging in America” Conference in Las Vegas in March, 2009. The meeting attendees felt that such an effort was imperative at this time, in part to “shorten the learning curve” by synthesizing current knowledge regarding proven strategies for overcoming common challenges, and equally importantly to facilitate policy development, research, and advocacy. The Center was asked to take the leadership role in this effort, based in part on our previous success in hosting the “Creating Aging-Friendly Communities” online conference, in collaboration with Community Strengths, which attracted more than 750 participants representing 47 states and 17 countries.

The *Compendium* was disseminated through print and electronic channels to more than one hundred individuals and organizations, and was featured in four presentations at the annual ASA/NCOA “Aging in America” Conference in Chicago this March. An online version is available on the Center’s website at: [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/research\\_units/casas/  
publications.html](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/research_units/casas/publications.html)

The Center would like to express its sincere appreciation to all those who participated in this project, and especially to MetLife Foundation and the Eugene and Rose Kleiner Family Foundation for their generous support, without which the *Compendium* would not have been possible.

## University of California Villages Project

The University of California Villages Project is an ongoing effort by the Center to examine the sustainability and potential effectiveness of the “Village” model, an innovative grassroots community-based approach designed to help individuals to “age in place” through the provisions of instrumental assistance, social network building activities, and opportunities for social engagement. Modeled after Beacon Hill Village (BHV), a consumer-driven, membership association started in 2001 by a group of older adults living in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston, at least 50 of these grassroots neighborhood-based associations have emerged throughout the United States, and hundreds of others currently are in formation. In return for annual dues, members of these “Villages” receive a variety of services and support (e.g., transportation, grocery shopping, referrals to home care and other discounted services, care coordination, volunteer opportunities, social and cultural events) specifically designed to help them age in place and avoid institutionalization.

In partnership with NCB Capital Impact and with support from the SCAN Foundation, the Center has initiated an ambitious research agenda designed to document the growth of the Village movement and assess its sustainability and potential impacts. The Center has surveyed Villages nationwide regarding their membership composition and dues structures. The findings will be part of a report that for the first time documents the number of Villages in the U.S. and the characteristics of the seniors they serve. The Center also has examined data collection efforts currently in use by Villages, and is pilot testing data collection tools, including member intake forms and satisfaction forms, that will assist in future evaluations of the Village model. Future plans include an examination of Village organizational characteristics, an assessment of the sustainability of the Village model, and a longitudinal study of the potential benefits of the Village model for reducing unmet care needs and promoting aging in place. If proven to be sustainable and effective, the Village approach could become a model for neighborhood-based, consumer-driven alternatives to expensive nursing home care, thereby supporting federal and state government efforts to reduce institutionalization, promote consumer autonomy, and enable older adults and persons with disabilities to live in the least restrictive setting possible. External funding is currently being sought to support these efforts.



University of California Villages Project Team: Amanda Lehning, Carrie Graham, Vivian Chan, Niaz Murtaza, Andrew Scharlach, Jonathan Rogers, and Megan Chen

## Local Government Adoption of Aging-Friendly Policies and Programs

Amanda Lehning, a Graduate Student Researcher at the Center since 2005, recently completed her dissertation, entitled “Local Government Adoption of Aging-Friendly Policies and Programs: A Mixed Methods Approach.” This study explored 1) the extent to which cities, counties, and public transit agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area have adopted aging-friendly policies, programs, and infrastructure changes, and 2) the diffusion factors, community characteristics, and government characteristics associated with such adoption.

Using surveys and interviews with local government employees, the study examined innovations in the areas of community design, housing, transportation, health and supportive services, and opportunities for community engagement. The aging-friendly policies and programs most often adopted by local governments include those that target alternative forms of transportation, including infrastructure changes to improve walkability, discounted public transportation fares, changes to improve the accessibility of public transit, and incentives for mixed-use neighborhoods. The policies and programs adopted least often are those that aim to help older adults continue driving and those that provide incentives to develop accessible new housing for older adults.

Higher levels of adoption of aging-friendly provisions are found in cities with larger populations, larger percent of the population with a disability, and have experienced public pressure or individual advocacy for aging-friendly policies and programs. Aging-friendly policies and programs are less likely in cities whose population have higher educational attainment, higher median household income, and a larger proportion of the population age 65 and older. In addition, five factors emerged from qualitative interviews that contribute to aging-friendly policies and programs: 1) advocacy and civic engagement, 2) funding, 3) community characteristics, 4) collaboration and communication, and 5) state and federal mandates.

This research received support from the Hartford Doctoral Fellows Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant, and the Society for Social Work Research. To request a copy of the study findings, please contact Amanda Lehning at [ajlehning@gmail.com](mailto:ajlehning@gmail.com).



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## Center Alumni Accept Positions

The Center is proud to report that three former Graduate Student Researchers have accepted positions in academic and research settings. Erica Auh (PhD '09) recently started a new job as lecturer at the Graduate School of Social Welfare at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, Korea. Dr. Auh worked at the Center from 2003 to 2006.

Kristen Gustavson (PhD '10) will soon begin her new position as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Clinical Services Research Training Program at UC San Francisco. Dr. Gustavson worked at the Center from 2003 to 2008.

Amanda Lehning (PhD '10) has accepted a postdoctoral fellowship in the *Social Research Training on Applied Issues of Aging* Training Program at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Dr. Lehning worked at the Center from 2005 to 2010.

## Farewell to Senior Research Associate

The Center would like to thank Teresa Dal Santo, Senior Research Associate, for her many contributions to Center projects. Dr. Dal Santo worked as the Center's Program Coordinator from 1998 to 2009, and recently coordinated the Center's multi-year evaluation of the impact of the National Family Caregiver Support Program, supported by the California Department of Aging and the Archstone Foundation. Her statistical expertise and knowledge of health and social service programs were of invaluable assistance throughout this project. Dr. Dal Santo also supervised and mentored numerous undergraduate and graduate research assistants.

## Swedish Colleagues Visit Center

In November of 2009, the Center hosted three researchers from the Ersta Sköndal University College Department of Civil Society Research: Professor Lars Svedberg, Assistant Professor Johan von Essen, and Assistant Professor Magnus Jegermalm, who was also a visiting scholar at Berkeley's School of Social Welfare during Fall 2009. The three scholars gave a public presentation entitled "Civil Society in Prosperity and Recession: The Case of Sweden."

The presentation discussed the role of civic participation and non-governmental organizations in Sweden over the past two decades, with particular attention to supports for older persons. While Sweden has undergone important political changes and has been through both times of prosperity and recession during this period, civic participation has remained remarkably high and stable. Indeed, in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis and retrenchment in welfare state provisions, a new national population study confirms long-lasting stability of voluntary sector participation. Even the traditional Scandinavian popular mass movement pattern of civic engagement seems to be stable and if changing, is doing so only slowly. The presenters highlighted empirical data and discussed how theoretical approaches to civil society and civic participation can facilitate an understanding of transformations in the welfare state.