

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

Project Abstract

The primary goal of the Friendly Neighbor Program (FNP) is to improve the quality of life of at-risk seniors ages 60 and older and assist them in maintaining their independence in their homes for as long as possible. The FNP utilizes volunteers from various facets of the community who may come into contact with at-risk seniors in their daily activities. These volunteers are trained to recognize signs indicating difficulties in physical, mental, or emotional health, finances, home maintenance that warrant the volunteer's referral of the senior to the FNP. The FNP Outreach Nurse travels to the home of the client, assesses the client's need, and links the client with appropriate service agencies throughout the community free of charge.

The Ashtabula County region benefits greatly from FNP efforts. Service agencies throughout the community gain access to clients they may not otherwise have been aware of. There may be a significant decrease in health care costs as a result of keeping seniors out of long term care facilities for a longer period of time. Additionally, the FNP seeks to identify and ameliorate service gaps for seniors in Ashtabula County. Of particular interest are seniors with unstable medical conditions who are not eligible for home health services. This population is at risk for more frequent hospitalizations and traumatic injuries due to falls and other accidents, as evidenced by empirical data compiled by the past and current FNP Outreach Nurses.

The FNP is based on a successful initiative called Gatekeepers, which was developed in 1978 by social worker Ray Raschko at Spokane Mental Health's Elder Services in Spokane, Washington. This program, which is still thriving today, has been utilized throughout the state of Washington and nationally. Gatekeepers train community members to identify isolated, at-risk seniors and utilize home visits by social workers to assess client needs. The Gatekeepers program model has been adopted by providers in nearby Lake and Cuyahoga counties, but the FNP is unique within Ashtabula County.

Seniors ages 60 and older who reside in Ashtabula County, Ohio are eligible for this free service. Ashtabula County residents ages 65 and older number 14,978 or 14.6% of the total population. Since the FNP serves individuals 60 and older, an even larger percentage of the population is eligible for services. This percentage is considerably higher than the United States average of 12.4% and the state of Ohio average of 13.3% of the population being comprised of senior citizens. Ashtabula County residents ages 45-64 number nearly 23.6% of the population, or about 24,000 individuals. A portion of this age demographic is already eligible for services, and the remaining portion will be eligible within the near future. The FNP is acutely aware that the baby boomer population will provide new challenges in the delivery of services in the near future, and these challenges will require increased services.

Program Narrative

At approximately 702 square miles, rural Ashtabula County is the largest county in terms of area in the state of Ohio. It is currently populated by approximately 102,703 individuals. Senior citizens number a staggering 14.6% of the population, which is higher than the state of Ohio average of 13.3% and the United States average of 12.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

The advent of the baby boomer population joining and expanding this category is present. It is evident that access to health care services for senior citizens in Ashtabula County is of great importance. The rural nature of Ashtabula County may contribute to resident seniors' further isolation from socialization, as well as from appropriate health care.

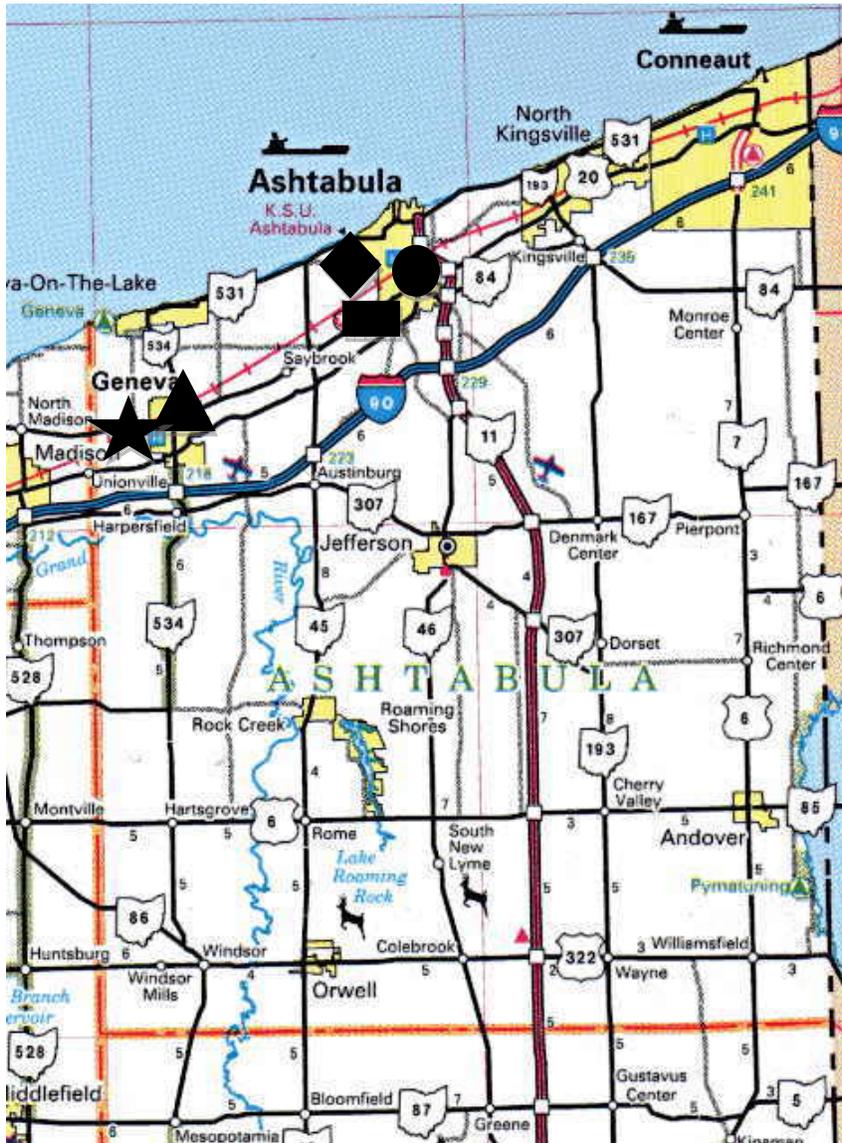
Ashtabula County residents recognize the importance of increased services for seniors and support corresponding initiatives. In March of 2005, two community research surveys were conducted across Ashtabula County to determine the attitude of residents toward such services. Triad Research Group utilized telephone interview to conduct one of the studies. Researchers divided the county into four regions, and interviewed 400 individuals (50% male, 50% female) who had voted in two or more of the last four elections. General findings of the study indicate that 73% of surveyed voters find it extremely or very important for Ashtabula County to provide services to seniors. Voters claimed that "some (52%) or only a few (19%) of older adults in Ashtabula County have children or relatives nearby to help take care of them as they get older". In addition, a growing need for services is recognized as 70% of surveyed voters thought that there were more people in the county that need services as compared to five years ago (Triad Research Group, 2005).

Burges and Burges Strategists conducted the second study of Ashtabula County residents' attitudes towards senior services in 2005. The study utilized several modalities, including twenty in-depth interviews with community leaders and executive directors of publicly funded agencies, four focus groups of senior citizens representing four major cities in the county, and the telephone survey conducted by Triad Research Group. Researchers found that "Most respondents believed all services for seniors could be improved and expanded". Individuals that were surveyed voiced that "the need for better transportation and health services were most important" (Burges and Burges Strategists, 2005). It is clear that residents of Ashtabula County find there are unmet health needs for the nearly 15,000 senior citizens in the area.

The FNP is a free service that utilizes referrals from trained community members to identify isolated, at-risk senior citizens ages 60 and over in Ashtabula County, Ohio. FNP staff makes in-home assessments and subsequent home visits to identify the senior citizens' needs and link the seniors with the appropriate service agencies throughout the county, among other functions. Since the FNP serves individuals 60 and older, it serves more than the 14.6% of the population comprised of senior citizens ages 65 and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Ashtabula County residents ages 45-64 number nearly 23.6% of the population, or about 24,000 individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Some of these individuals are already eligible for services from the FNP, and it is clear that this age demographic is large and will be entering senior citizen status quickly. This process will merit increased services for senior citizens in Ashtabula County. Therefore, over 15,000 residents are currently eligible for FNP services and approximately 24,000 more residents are eligible or will be within the next decade or so. This totals 38.2% of the total population of Ashtabula County. The map below depicts the FNP service area of Ashtabula County, Ohio. The symbols indicate the location of the five entities that comprise the FNP Consortium.

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

Map of Ashtabula County



Map Key- Locations of Network Members

- ★ University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program
- ▲ Geneva Area Senior Corporation (GASC)
- Ashtabula County Council on Aging, Inc. (ACCOA)
- ◆ Ashtabula County Community Action Agency (ACCAA)
- Ashtabula County Department of Job and Family Services

The FNP will provide assistance to clients with transportation, prescription assistance, and other services that will increase the senior citizens' access to quality health care. This is accomplished by the combined efforts of the FNP staff and nearly 40 collaborating service agencies throughout Ashtabula County, including the organizations represented on the FNP

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

Consortium/ Network. An asterisk (*) indicates that the FNP staff has trained individuals from the organization.

1. *Adult Protective Services
2. *Catholic Charities Guardianship Program
3. *Catholic Charities Credit Counseling
4. *2-1-1 ACQUIRE Information & Referral
5. *Area Assisted Living Facilities
6. *Geneva, Ashtabula, Jefferson, Conneaut Senior Centers
7. Country Neighbor Program
8. Alzheimer's Association
9. *Telephone Support/Reassurance
10. Outpatient Clinical Counseling – Catholic Charities, Psychological Services
11. *American Alert – Emergency Alert Button
12. *Emergency Heat & Energy Assistance Programs
13. *St. Vincent DePaul Emergency Services
14. Legal Aid Services
15. *U.S. Department of Agriculture Home and Repair Loans and Grants
16. CHIP Program
17. Homestead Exemption
18. All Area Food Banks
19. Dream Center
20. *Meals on Wheels – Home Delivered Meals
21. *Passport
22. *Home Maintenance Program – Handyman Service
23. *Home Weatherization
24. *Homemaker Services/CHORE
25. *All Area Home Health Agencies
26. Visiting Physicians
27. Hospice of the Western Reserve
28. *Navigator Program – American Cancer Society
29. Housing Resources – Low Income and Veteran Housing
30. Cancer Support and Treatment
31. Diabetes Support Group
32. *Hearing Assistance – Speech, Hearing and Rehabilitation Center
33. *Medicaid/Medicare Medical and Health Services
34. *Social Security Administration
35. *Medical Equipment & Lending Programs
36. University Hospitals Geneva & Conneaut Community Shuttle Services
37. *Ashtabula County Transportation System & Senior Levy Transportation
38. *Prescription Drug Assistance Experts

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

- 39. Supplemental and Other Health Insurance Expert
- 40. Area Nursing Homes
- 41. Area Discharge Planners
- 42. *Northwest Ambulance District

To date, the FNP has trained nearly 1,600 volunteers from these and other sources. The growing number of volunteers is a partial byproduct of the growing demand for the program's services.

The FNP Consortium's strategic plan is to continue to meet the primary FNP goals of identifying at-risk seniors, connecting them to services, monitoring their physical and mental status and recruit/train community volunteers. The Consortium has focused primarily on the expansion and sustainability of the FNP.

University Hospitals Geneva Medical Center Friendly Neighbor Program

Works Cited

Burges and Burges Strategists, (2005). Community research report regarding senior services.

Ohio Biz Web Consulting, LLC, (2006). Image- Ashtabula County, Ohio. Retrieved September 10, 2007, from Ohio's Search Experience Web site:
www.ohiobiz.com/maps/images/ashta.jpg

National Center on Elder Abuse, Stein, Karen (2007). A primer on outcomes-based evaluation for elder abuse projects, programs, and training.

Spokane Mental Health, (2007). Gatekeeper Program. Retrieved September 12, 2007, from Spokane Mental Health: Serving with Excellence since 1970 Web site:
<http://www.smhca.org/gatekeeper.aspx>

Triad Research Group, Inc., (2005). A survey of voters in Ashtabula County regarding support for senior services levy.

United States Department of Health and Human Services, Retrieved September 10, 2007, from Healthy People 2010 Web site: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/>

U.S. Census Bureau, (2007, August 31). Ashtabula County, Ohio. Retrieved September 4, 2007, from State and County Quick Facts Web site:
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/39007.html>.

U.S. Census Bureau, (2006). Ashtabula County, Ohio. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from Fact Sheet Web site:
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&_lang=en&_sse=on&_state=04000US39&_county=Ashtabula%20County

U.S. Census Bureau, (2000). Ashtabula County, Ohio- Population Overview. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from E-Podunk: The Power of Place Web site: <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/popInfo.php?locIndex=16284>